

GREEK MUSIC AND THE AESTHETIC  
OF THE FIFTH CENTURY THEATRE

By  
GERALD BYRD FORBES

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## PREFACE

This study has been undertaken with the practicing theatre man and the non-musician in mind. Its approach is believed to be unique in one respect only, namely, that it has tried to establish a direct relationship between the musical activity of the fifth century B. C. and the theatre of the same period. Many excellent treatises on Greek music have been published within the last twenty years, among them the works of Gustave Reese, Paul H. Lang, and Curt Sachs. But these scholars, while providing the student with voluminous amounts of information, have been primarily motivated by musicological concerns. That is, they have confined their interests, for the most part, to a consideration of Greek music as music; there has been little or no attempt to establish the relevance of the music to its contemporary art form, the classical theatre. Moreover, the few attempts which have been made at citing analogous elements in the two arts have usually bogged down under the weight of conventional assumptions.

The present study is unlike those just mentioned in an additional respect. It is intended to supplement the work done by students of theatre aesthetics and has therefore been written in non-technical language out of consideration for students who may have had little formal training in music. This limitation has made it necessary to include occasional definitions of terms whose meaning would be immediately obvious to the practicing musician. Additional terms have had to be redefined, since contemporary meanings differ from those which would have been

understood by fifth century Greeks. A comparison of the classical and current definitions of "music" provides a typical example of this type of ambiguity. Contemporary usage limits the word specifically to compositions for, and performances of, voices and instruments. With the classical Greeks this was not the case. By the term mousikē they encompassed the realms of melody, poetry, rhythm, and dance. Musical activity, then, extended to several of the same areas with which theatrical activity was concerned. This commonality of expression is believed to have been extensive enough to serve as a valid justification for the present investigation. Within such a context one omission will appear to be most conspicuous. There has been no effort to deal with the Greek language itself; in fact, poetry has been considered only insofar as it has afforded information about the varieties of lyric meters. For the most part, the writer has, out of necessity, been compelled to consult secondary sources on matters pertaining to the language. In this respect, the translations of his friend and colleague, Mark Hawthorne, have been most helpful and illuminating.

The study is contained in two parts, the first of which is devoted to the purely formal and philosophical aspects of melody as it was conceived in the fifth century. Part Two embraces an examination of the rhythmic and kinetic elements of Greek music, with particular attention being given to the dance. The final chapter of the study, of course, carries the investigation into the precinct of the theatre per se and, in the process of forming conclusions, cites those areas within which further research is needed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	ii
PREFACE . . . . .	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	vi
PART I. MELODY	
Chapter	
1. THE STRUCTURE OF MELODY . . . . .	1
2. MODE AND ETHOS . . . . .	7
3. THE LITERARY BIAS . . . . .	20
4. MUSICAL FORMS AND INNOVATIONS . . . . .	27
5. THE APOLLONIAN-DIONYSIAC DUALITY . . . . .	46
6. MUSICAL SPACE . . . . .	59
PART II. RHYTHM AND DANCE	
7. RHYTHM AND METER . . . . .	69
8. LENGTH AND STRESS . . . . .	79
9. THE DANCE . . . . .	88
10. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THEATRE PRACTICE . . . . .	112
BIPLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	136

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.	The Harmoniai Transposed into the Dorian Octave . . .	6
2.	The First Delphic Hymn . . . . .	30
3.	The Skolion of Seikolos . . . . .	38
4.	The Hymn to the Sun by Mesomedes . . . . .	72

## PART I. MELODY

### Chapter 1

#### THE STRUCTURE OF MELODY

Any serious consideration of Greek music will soon disclose the fact that, insofar as theoretical structure is concerned, the Greeks were almost exclusively preoccupied with melody rather than harmony. Since harmony was a comparatively late step in the development of music as we know it today, such a preoccupation need not imply that Greek music had not kept abreast of the other arts. In fact, the musical studies of Pythagoras, Terpander, Timotheus, and Aristoxenus suggest that the melodic texture conceived by the Greeks had greater passion and sensuousness than we are accustomed to in the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, this wide range of musical feeling resulted largely from a broad tonal variety in the use of the various "modes," and from the employment of intervals which were smaller than our present half-steps. But the sophistication of Greek melodies may also be attributed to the ability of the listener to discern and appreciate the complexities of the melodic process. It was an ability which depended ultimately upon the faculties of reason and sensory perception--faculties first cited by Aristoxenus as essential to the apprehension of melody.

It is plain that the apprehension of a melody consists in noting with both ear and intellect every distinction as it arises in the successive sounds--successive, for melody, like all branches of music, consists in a successive production. For the apprehension of music depends on these two faculties, sense-perception and memory;



for we must perceive the sound that is present, and remember that which is past. In no other way can we follow the phenomena of music.<sup>1</sup>

In the above passage, the word "successive" is important because it signifies that, in contrast to the plastic arts, music is a discursive medium which cannot be presented wholly and completely within a given moment of time. Consequently, melody, like the other elements of music, was understood by the Greeks as a form which was always in "a process of becoming"--a process in which one element passed into infinity as another came into being. The transitory nature of this process exerted a significant influence upon the structure of Greek melody. Because of it melodies had to be designed in such a way that a listener could both identify the magnitude of musical intervals and determine the function of those intervals in a given system or arrangement.<sup>2</sup> These two "audience-considerations" must be kept in mind as we turn to an examination of melodic structure.

Tetrachords. The tetrachord, the foundation on which Greek melodies were built, was a group of four successive notes or musical degrees which originally corresponded to the tuning strings of the lyre and thereby derived its name, "four strings." Of these four notes, the two outer tones formed the interval of a perfect fourth and were fixed or invariable, while the two intermediate tones were given great flexibility in pitch. The possibility of this internal variation within a framework whose outer limits were rigidly controlled provided theoretically for an infinite number of potential melodic patterns. At the same time, it confined those patterns to a compass which could be easily followed and

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<sup>1</sup>The Harmonics of Aristoxenus, Tr. H. S. Macran, pp. 193-94; henceforth referred to as Aristoxenus.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Cf. Macran's notes, p. 269.



remembered by a listener. In this way, the basic structure of Greek melody was designed to call into play both the imaginative and rational powers of the intellect.

The genera. A tetrachord was classified according to the manner in which its intermediate tones were distributed, the distribution falling into one of three genera. Identified respectively as (1) Diatonic, (2) Chromatic, or (3) Enharmonic, these genera were composed in the following manner. In diatonic tetrachords, the intervals within the perfect fourth consisted of two whole steps plus one half-step.<sup>3</sup> In chromatic tetrachords, the intervals within the perfect fourth comprised two half-steps plus one and one-half steps. In enharmonic tetrachords, one interval--the ditone--occupied two whole steps while the remaining intervals were each made up of quarter-tones or microtones.

As given above, the genera would seem to have been stable enough to be readily identified by a listener. There would appear to have been little difficulty in distinguishing one from another. Our appreciation of the average Athenian's musical discrimination is immeasurably enhanced, therefore, when we are told that the composition of the genera was further complicated by the fact that certain "colours or shades of distinction" known as chroai were allowed to exist within at least two of the three genera. Thus, in proportion to the degree to which the internal intervals of each genus were either widened or narrowed, one could expect to hear diatonic tetrachords which were designated as "flat" or "sharp," and chromatic tetrachords referred to as "soft," "hemiolic," or "tonic."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>A half-step is the distance from one note in the major or minor scale to the note immediately adjacent to it. Two such intervals, then, constitute a whole step.

<sup>4</sup>Aristoxenus, p. 248.

Consequently, there must have been times when a listener could not distinguish the chromatic from the enharmonic genus. If this was true, then it is evident that the chroai were included in Greek melodies for other-than-rational appeals. In other words, these intervals furnished audible satisfaction without requiring a specific identification from the hearer.

Although the genera appear to be rather complex, all three types are known to have been employed in the music of fifth century Greece. As a matter of fact, the earliest evidence of the use of the enharmonic microtones is a fragment from Euripides' Orestes, accepted by most musicologists as an authentic relic from the fifth century B. C.

Scales and keys. When two tetrachords of any type were placed one after the other, they comprised a scale. The tetrachords could be placed in either conjunctive or disjunctive sequence. When placed conjunctly, the last note of the first tetrachord became the initial note of the successive one, thus producing a seven-tone scale. Disjunctive arrangement, on the other hand, placed one tetrachord consecutively after another in an ascending or descending pattern of pitch. This resulted in the eight-tone scale with which we are familiar today. When the same process was duplicated an octave higher, a two-octave descending scale from a<sup>1</sup> to B was formed and, in the case of conjunctive arrangement, the low A was added.<sup>5</sup> The entire scale was known to fourth century theorists as the Greater Perfect System (Disdiapason).

Within this system, the basic tonal material from which melodies were constructed was grouped into octave species called harmoniai. Each specie originated at a specific point in the Disdiapason, extended to an

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<sup>5</sup> In musical terminology, a<sup>1</sup> is located in the octave immediately above middle c (c<sup>1</sup>), a is in the octave just below it, and A is placed still an octave lower than a.

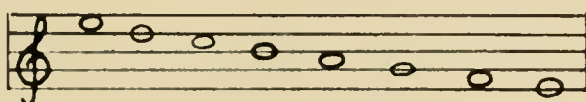
octave above or below that note, and acquired a name which was supposed to convey the essential character of the particular harmonia. The terminology which prevailed in classical times was as follows:

- $\underline{a}^1$  to  $\underline{a}$  - Hypodorian (also Hyperphrygian, Aeolian, Lokrian)\*
- $\underline{g}^1$  to  $\underline{g}$  - Hypophrygian (also Hyperlydian, Ionian, Iastian)\*
- $\underline{f}^1$  to  $\underline{f}$  - Hypolydian
- $\underline{e}^1$  to  $\underline{e}$  - Dorian
- $\underline{d}^1$  to  $\underline{d}$  - Phrygian
- $\underline{c}^1$  to  $\underline{c}$  - Lydian
- $\underline{b}$  to  $\underline{B}$  - Mixolydian (also Hyperdorian)\*

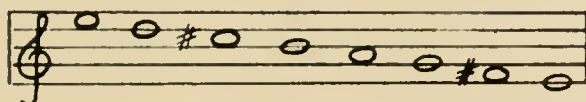
\* The alternative names in parentheses represent the terminology of later ages. Some of them indicate either lower or higher octaves.<sup>6</sup>

For practical purposes, such as the normal range of the adult male voice and, in particular, the limited range of the kithara, the harmoniai were used in transposition into the  $\underline{e}^1$  -  $\underline{e}$  octave of the Dorian harmony. In this transposition they became known in the Hellenistic period as tonoi or "keys." Their respective tonalities may be indicated in modern notation by the addition of appropriate accidentals to the standard white-key scale on  $\underline{e}$ , as given below:

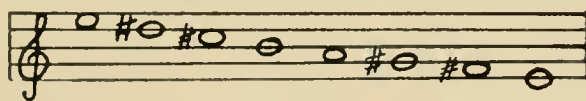
Dorian:



Phrygian:

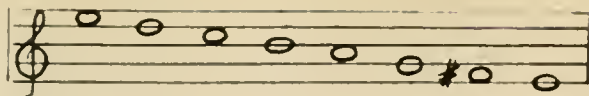


Lydian:

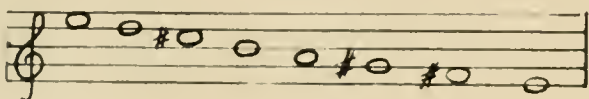


<sup>6</sup>Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music, p. 303; henceforth referred to as Harvard Dictionary.

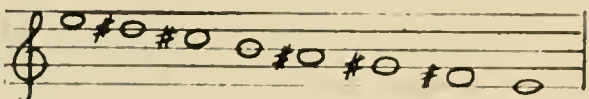
Hypodorian:



Hypophrygian:



Hypolydian:



Mixolydian:

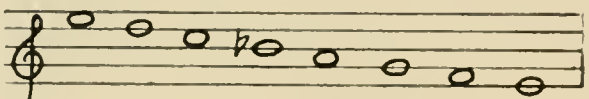


Fig. 1.- The Harmoniai Transposed into the Dorian Octave.<sup>7</sup>

It is evident from these examples that the distinguishing character of a particular harmony or mode was due to the way in which the internal tones of its constituent tetrachords were varied. Moreover, an attempt was made to associate these modal characteristics with the national temperaments of the various confederacies which existed in Asia Minor, e.g., Dorian, Ionian, Aeolian, Lydian, and Phrygian. Since the modes played an important part in fifth century drama, it is necessary to give some consideration to the relationship postulated between mode and ethos. To this subject Chapter Two is devoted.

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<sup>7</sup>Fig. 1 is an elaboration of a suggestion in Apel's Harvard Dictionary, p. 303.



## Chapter 2

### MODE AND ETHOS

Of all the prescriptions concerning music which have been bequeathed to us by the ancient Greeks, the doctrine of the ethical nature and function of music has been the most difficult to comprehend. One is inclined to dismiss as naive those musical theorists who spoke of the Dorian mode as "virile and bellicose," the Hypodorian as "majestic and stable," the Mixolydian as "pathetic and plaintive," the Phrygian as "agitated and Bacchic," the Hypophrygian as "active," the Lydian as "mournful," and the Hypolydian as "dissolute and voluptuous."<sup>8</sup>

Before we can attempt an explanation of musical ethos as it was attributed to the various modes, however, we must be certain that we understand what was meant by the term "mode" itself. The musical scales which were included in the preceding chapter must not be regarded as the modes themselves but as simply a skeletal framework within which the essences of the modes could be expressed. Hence, as Curt Sachs suggests, ethos was attached not to the modal scales but to the melodies which were based upon the essential characteristics of those scales.<sup>9</sup> In his discussion of Jewish music, Abraham Idelsohn included a rather comprehensive definition of mode which may illustrate some of its functions in a purely musical sense. A mode, Idelsohn said,

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<sup>8</sup>Curt Sachs, The Rise of Music in the Ancient World, p. 248; henceforth referred to as The Rise of Music.

<sup>9</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, Our Musical Heritage, p. 25.

is composed of a number of MOTIVES (i.e. short music figures or groups of tones) within a certain scale. The motives have different functions. There are beginning and concluding motives, and motives of conjunctive and disjunctive character. The composer operates with the material of these traditional folk motives within a certain mode for his creations. His composition is nothing but his arrangement and combination of this limited number of motives. His "freedom" of creation consists further in embellishments and in modulations from one mode to the other.<sup>10</sup>

But, as already mentioned, such a definition confines the concept of mode to purely musical terms. It cannot hope to account for the ethical force attributed to these "motives" by the ancient Greeks. Hence, it becomes necessary to look elsewhere in order to enlarge our understanding of musical ethos. A significant source of investigation was explored by G. Lowes Dickinson in his treatment of the way in which classical Greece strove to identify the aesthetic and ethical points of view. These two spheres, he maintained, were never sharply differentiated by the Greeks;

thus the most beautiful work of art, in the Greek sense of the term, was that which made the finest and most harmonious appeal not only to the physical but to the moral sense, and while communicating the highest and most perfect pleasure to the eye or the ear, had also the power to touch and inform the soul with the grace which was her moral excellence.<sup>11</sup>

It is interesting that Dickinson chose the word "harmonious" to illustrate the identification of the aesthetic with the ethical, because harmonia, in the sense in which it was used by the Greeks, signified a close adjustment or "fitting together of parts." In musical terminology, it connoted a "scale or system as a whole whose parts have been adjusted

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<sup>10</sup>Abraham Idelsohn, Jewish Music; quoted in Gustave Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life, p. 209.



in their proper relations."<sup>12</sup> The classical ideal of the interrelatedness of parts or harmonious proportions was believed to be as applicable to the realm of character as to the realm of music. As Dickinson pointed out,

Character, in the Greek view, is a certain proportion of the various elements of the soul, and the right character is the right proportion. But the relation in which these elements stand to one another could be directly affected, it was found, by means of music; not only could the different emotions be excited or assuaged in various degrees, but the whole relation of the emotional to the rational element could be regulated and controlled by the appropriate melody and measure.<sup>13</sup>

Because he believed that the harmonies of music were analagous to those of the human soul, Plato accorded music the highest position of all the arts. In the Timaeus, he has his spokesman, Socrates, say,

Moreover, so much of music as is adapted to the sound of the voice and to the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony; and harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls, is not regarded by the intelligent votary of the Muses as given by them with a view to irrational pleasure, which is deemed to be the purpose of it in our day, but as meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself.<sup>14</sup>

It may be inferred from this passage that Plato was interested in the harmonies of music, not so much as an end in themselves but as a means of improving human behavior. Consequently, he saw music as a public rather than private good, and his preference for certain harmonies was guided by this belief in their ability to better the well-being of the state. With the welfare of the res publica as his criterion, therefore, Plato rejected the dirge-like Mixolydian and the intense Lydian as useless to women and

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<sup>12</sup>Aristoxenus, p. 224.

<sup>13</sup>Dickinson, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup>Plato, Timaeus, Tr. Benjamin Jowett, p. 30.

unfit for men. The Ionian and plain Lydian he described as soft and convivial, while the Dorian and Phrygian were retained as exemplifying those qualities which were most to be desired in the ideal state. In The Republic Socrates, in speaking to Glaucon, says,

Leave us that harmony [the Dorian] that would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare or in any enforced business, and who, when he has failed, either meeting wounds or death or having fallen into some other mishap, in all these conditions confronts fortune with steadfast endurance and repels her strokes. And another [the Phrygian] for such a man engaged in works of peace, not enforced but voluntary, either trying to persuade somebody of something and imploring him--whether it be a god, through prayer, or a man, by teaching and admonition--or contrariwise yielding himself to another who is petitioning or teaching him or trying to change his opinions, and in consequence faring according to his wish, and not bearing himself arrogantly, but in all this acting modestly and moderately and acquiescing in the outcome. Leave us these two harmonies--the enforced and the voluntary--that will best imitate the utterances of men failing or succeeding, the temperate, the brave--leave us these.<sup>15</sup>

Plato's pupil, Aristotle, while agreeing with the basic position that harmonies ought to be classified according to their influence on the souls of men, nevertheless challenged his master's view that music was to be admitted to society only as an instrument for promoting civic virtue. He believed, for example, that entertainment and emotional release were legitimate ends of musical expression. In The Politics he also charged Socrates with inconsistency in allowing the Phrygian harmony to share equal honors with the Dorian. That charge is contained in the following passage, where Aristotle says of Socrates,

[He] does not do well in allowing only the Phrygian harmony along with the Dorian, and that when he has rejected the aulos among instruments; for the Phrygian harmony has the same effect among harmonies as the aulos among instruments--both are violently exciting and emotional. This is shown by poetry; for all Bacchic versification and all movement of that sort belong particularly to the aulos

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<sup>15</sup>Plato, The Republic III.399, Tr. Paul Shorey.

among the instruments, and these metres find their suitable accompaniment in melodies in the Phrygian harmony among the harmonies.<sup>16</sup>

Along with the view that the harmonies altered character and affected morals, the ancients held the notion that, in some way, each harmony reflected the temperamental characteristics of the particular geographical region in which it supposedly originated. This was a belief which persisted at least as late as the fifth century of the Christian era, when Boethius, the Roman mathematician and philosopher, echoed Plato's sympathies, saying,

From this source, also, the greatest alterations of character arise. A lascivious mind takes pleasure in the more lascivious modes, or often hearing them is softened and corrupted. Contrariwise, a sterner mind either finds joy in the more stirring modes or is aroused by them. This is why the musical modes are called by the names of peoples, as the Lydian and Phrygian modes, for whatever mode each people, as it were, delights in is named after it. For a people takes pleasure in modes resembling its own character.<sup>17</sup>

References indicate that the association of music with national temperament was transmitted in uninterrupted succession from the classical period to the Hellenistic, and from there into the early centuries of the Christian era, from whence it carried over into medieval philosophy. Typical is the observation of Polybius of Megalopolis, who, in the second century B. C., spoke of the natural willfulness and forbidding temper of the Arcadians (who inhabited a province in the middle of the Peloponnesus), and of the continuous efforts which were made musically "to tame and civilize" their "stubborn spirits by definite habituation."<sup>18</sup> Athenaeus (fl. 200 A. D.) cited the writings of earlier authors who also accepted

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<sup>16</sup>Aristotle, The Politics VIII.vii.9-10, Tr. H. Rackham.

<sup>17</sup>Boethius, De institutione musica; quoted in Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup>Polybius of Megalopolis, Histories IV.20-21; cited in Arnold J. Toynbee, Greek Historical Thought, p. 64.



the apparent correspondence between musical harmonies and tribal characteristics. In the Deipnosophists he writes,

Heracleides of Pontus, however, says in the third book of his work On Music that the Phrygian should not be called a separate harmony any more than the Lydian. For there are only three harmonies, since there are also only three kinds of Greeks--Dorians, Aeolians, and Ionians. There is no small difference in the characters of these three, for while the Lacedaemonians preserve better than all other Dorians the customs of their fathers, and the Thessalians (these are they who conferred upon the Aeolians the origin of their race) have always maintained practically the same mode of life, the great majority of the Ionians, on the other hand, have undergone changes due to barbarian rulers who have for the time being come in contact with them. Hence the melodic style which the Dorians constructed they called the Dorian harmony; Aeolian they called the harmony which the Aeolians sang; Ionian, they said of the third one, which they heard Ionians sing. Now the Dorian harmony exhibits the quality of manly vigor, of magnificent bearing, not relaxed or merry, but sober and intense, neither varied nor complicated. But the Aeolian character contains the elements of ostentation and turgidity, and even conceit; these qualities are in keeping with their horse-breeding and their way of meeting strangers; yet this does not mean malice, but is, rather, lofty and confident. Hence also their fondness for drinking is something appropriate to them, also their love-affairs, and the entirely relaxed nature of their daily life. Wherefore they have the character of the Hypodorian harmony, as it is called. This, Heracleides says, is in fact the one which they called Aeolian . . . Next in order let us examine the Milesians' character, which the Ionians illustrate. Because of their excellent physical condition they bear themselves haughtily, they are full of irate spirit, hard to placate, fond of contention, never condescending to kindness nor cheerfulness, displaying a lack of affection and a hardness in their character. Hence also the kind of music known as the Ionian harmony is neither bright nor cheerful, but austere and hard, having a seriousness which is not ignoble; and so their harmony is well-adapted to tragedy.<sup>19</sup>

While the Greek concept of musical ethos undoubtedly stemmed from the lack of sharp differentiation between the ethical and the aesthetic, and from the predisposition of the ancient Greeks to attribute the characteristics of national temperament to the various modes, it also proceeded from the belief that the human microcosm contained in miniature

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<sup>19</sup>Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists VI, cited in Strunk, pp. 48-49.

the structure and internal relations of the universal macrocosm, and that the musical harmonies themselves contained cosmological and, indeed, astrological significance. In the Timaeus, for example, Plato advises,

The motions which are naturally akin to the divine principle within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. These each man should follow, and correct the courses of the head which were corrupted at our birth, and by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the universe, should assimilate the thinking being to the thought, renewing his original nature, and having assimilated them should attain to that perfect life which the gods have set before mankind, both for the present and the future.<sup>20</sup>

Interpreting this view, Egon Wellesz suggests that it makes a purely aesthetic appreciation of music, as an art, impossible. This attitude, he contends,

is of importance for the understanding of Platonic and Neoplatonic musical theory. Music of the highest quality must of necessity be beautiful, because the creative artist imitates the harmoniai according to which the circles of the soul [i.e. the World-Soul] revolve. But his work could never transmit the perfection of the cosmic harmoniai, because the human soul is blended of a mixture inferior in quality to that from which the World-Soul was compounded.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship which existed between the "circles" of the human soul and the universal harmonies was not only evident to classical Greece; it was one of the constituent facts of Graeco-Roman and medieval philosophy. This truth is borne out by the statements of two men--Diodorus of Agrigium (ca. 90-20 B. C.) and Boethius (480?-520? A. D.). Diodorus declared,

God, in His Providence, has related in a single system the evolutions of the stars of heaven and the characters of men, and maintains them in perpetual motion to all eternity, imparting to each the lot which Destiny assigns.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Plato, Timaeus, pp. 73-74.

<sup>21</sup>Egon Wellesz, A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography, 2nd Ed., p. 50.

<sup>22</sup>Toynbee, p. 48.

Boethius expanded the earlier view in a way which was regarded favorably not only by the Middle Ages but by the seventeenth century, where it was incorporated in Milton's Paradise Lost. Boethius' belief, essentially, was that there were three kinds of music:

the first, the music of the universe; the second, human music; the third, instrumental music . . . The first, the music of the universe, is especially to be studied in the combining of the elements and the variety of the seasons which are observed in the heavens. How indeed could the swift mechanism of the sky move silently in its course? And although this sound does not reach our ears (as must for many reasons be the case), the extremely rapid motion of such great bodies could not be altogether without sound, especially since the courses of the stars are joined together by such mutual adaptation that nothing more equally compacted or united could be imagined. For some are borne higher and others lower, and all are revolved with a just impulse, and from their different inequalities an established order of their courses may be deduced. For this reason an established order of modulation cannot be lacking in this celestial revolution.<sup>23</sup>

In postulating a correspondence between cosmic phenomena, modal harmonies, and human activity, Greece laid hold of a process which had begun in the Orient--a process in which the primitive superstitions of magic were slowly converted into artistic forms and expressions. In this conversion, the elemental forces of nature--"seasons of the year and parts of the day, sun and moon cycles, growth and weather, [the interaction of] man and woman, birth and death, healing, reincarnation<sup>24</sup>--were brought into relationship with human temperament. Eastern cosmology associated certain melodic patterns, and even individual notes, with certain planets and with the gods by which those planets were reputedly ruled. The gods, in turn, invested their respective planets with

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<sup>23</sup>Strunk, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup>Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization, pp. 13-14.



appropriate attributes of character which were supposedly reflected in the harmonies adopted by the various regions of Asia Minor. Thus, although the analogy may not hold in every case, it is conceivable that Jupiter, who represented majesty, was associated with the Hypodorian mode; Mars, personifying virility, with the Dorian; Venus, encouraging effeminacy, with the Lydian; Mercury, denoting craftiness, with the Hypolydian or Hypophrygian; and Saturn, signifying sadness, with the Mixolydian. With respect to these melodic patterns, Sachs observes,

Greece, like the Near and Middle East, must have known what the Hindus call raga and the Arabs maqam, the homogeneousness, in structure, mood, and character, of all the melodies belonging to a certain scale. Greece must have had melodic patterns.<sup>25</sup>

Of all the ethical properties ascribed to the various harmonies, however, those which were regarded by the ancient Greeks as homeopathic in nature seem strangest from the modern point of view. Aristotle accepted the trifold classification of the modes as educational, active, and hypnotic, but he warned that, while the educational modes were valuable for general use, the active and hypnotic ones were to be employed only by specialists.

“The active and hypnotic ones, while we may listen to them ourselves, should be left to other exponents. Mental disturbances, which are pathological in some cases, afflict all of us in reduced or acute measure. Thus we find pity and fear in the former instance and pathological disorders in the latter. Persons who are a prey to such disorders are seen to be restored when they listen to the delirious strains of sacred song, just as though they had been medically treated and purged. In precisely the same way, pity, fear, and other such emotions, in so far as they affect each of us, will yield to the purificatory effect and pleasurable relief produced by music. In fact, there is an element of harmless pleasure even in the melodies of specifically purificatory purpose.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Sachs, Our Musical Heritage, pp. 25-26.

<sup>26</sup>Aristotle, The Politics, Tr. in J. G. Warry, Greek Aesthetic Theory, pp. 122-23.

Conflicting statements by later scholars lead us to believe that, whether for good or ill, the Phrygian harmony was the one most naturally associated with the intoxicating and/or healing influences of music upon the human body. For example, Athenaeus writes,

That music can also heal diseases Theophrastus has recorded in his work On Inspiration: he says that persons subject to sciatica would always be free from its attacks if one played the aulos in the Phrygian harmony over the part affected. This harmony was first discovered by the Phrygians and constantly used by them.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to this view Boethius declared,

Indeed, it is well known how often song has overcome anger, how many wonders it has performed in affections of the body or mind. Who is unaware that Pythagoras, by means of a spondaic melody, calmed and restored to self-mastery a youth of Taormina who had become wrought up by the sound of the Phrygian mode?<sup>28</sup>

The incongruity which inheres in the association of the Phrygian mode with homeopathic practices is found in the fact that, ostensibly, Apollo was acknowledged as the god of healing; yet, because of its connection with the dithyramb, the Phrygian harmony was regarded as being specially dedicated to the worship of Dionysus. In this respect, Sachs says that paeans--hymns of thanksgiving or songs of praise--were originally a means of warding off sickness and death, and that the belief that music could heal through intoxication was one of the "numerous primeval remainders in the spiritual life of Greece."<sup>29</sup>

Questions which arise within the pseudo-Aristotelian Problems seem to indicate that there also must have been purely aesthetic factors which contributed to musical ethos. With reference to the relationship between music and ethos, the anonymous author of this work asks, "Why is

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<sup>27</sup>Strunk, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>29</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 253.

it that of all things which are perceived by the senses that which is heard alone possesses moral character? For music, even if it is unaccompanied by words, yet has character; whereas a colour and an odour and a savour have not."<sup>30</sup> Character, according to this passage, results from the very nature of sound, namely, its intrinsic movement. But this statement should not be misconstrued to mean the physical or acoustical movement of sound; it is, rather, perceptive movement which influences character. The author indicates as much when he states,

We perceive the movement which follows such and such a sound. This movement resembles moral character both in the rhythms and in the melodic disposition of the high and low notes . . . Now these movements are connected with action, and actions are indicative of moral character.<sup>31</sup>

Putting aside the purely rhythmical properties of sound, one feels that it is the elements of quality and pitch to which this author refers. That these two are integrally related is indicated by Aristoxenus' statement, "tension is the continuous transition of the voice from a lower position to a higher, relaxation that from a higher to a lower. Height of pitch is the result of tension, depth the result of relaxation."<sup>32</sup> Sachs believes that pitch was an indispensable aesthetic factor in creating ethos. He cites the pseudo-Aristotelian Problem (19:49) which characterizes a low note as "soft and calm," a high note as "exciting." But by far the most direct evidence of the role which pitch played in ethos, he claims, is Ptolemy's observation that

the same melody has an activating effect in the higher keys, and a depressing one in the lower keys, because a high pitch stretches the soul, while a low pitch slackens it. Therefore the keys in the

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<sup>30</sup>Problemata XIX.919<sup>b</sup>, Tr. E. S. Forster.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Aristoxenus, p. 172.



middle near the Dorian can be compared with well-ordered and stable states of the soul, the higher keys near the Mixolydian with the stirred and stimulated states, and the lower keys near the Hypodorian with the slack and feeble moods.<sup>33</sup>

Sachs points out that the relationship between pitch and ethos in Greek music derives significant support from recent investigations of Islamic music which attribute ethical qualities to the three pitch regions, high, middle, and low. At the same time, however, these investigations warn against our attaching too much importance to terms such as "high" and "low." According to Sachs,

High and low in their simplest, absolute meaning seem to be irrelevant in view of the fact that all Greek scales, in spite of their theoretical ranges, were cut off at both ends to fit in the best register of voices and instruments . . . "High" and "low," perceptible in the theoretical scales but imperceptible in actual melodies, must have meant something different from range, and probably something that the Greeks themselves found hard to grasp and describe--else they would have been more explicit.

The solution can certainly not be given out of our own experience of musical pitch, but rather from the two points that essentially distinguish the modern and the Greek co-ordination of keys. Our Western music has (a) no definite borderline between high and low, and (b) the keys follow one another at equal distances without being organized in a consistent body. In Greece, on the contrary, the Dorian mese immutably parted high from low, and in the relation of thesis and dynamis, this same note, immovable center of gravity whatever the key, linked the tonalities together in a perspective that made their characteristic distances apparent. Not the distances of range, however; but the distances from the thetic to the dynamic mese, which gave Greek melodies their musical, and hence nervous, tension.<sup>34</sup>

A serious examination of thesis and dynamis, however, would entail a discussion of the idea of "musical space," which will be reserved for a subsequent chapter.

The consideration of pitch as an essential ingredient of ethos

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<sup>33</sup>The Harmonies of Claudius Ptolemy; quoted in Sachs, The Rise of Music, pp. 248-49.

<sup>34</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 250.

must be concluded, with one reservation. Pitch was by no means the only aesthetic factor involved in Greek melodies. On the basis of an analogy with Oriental melodic patterns, Sachs speculates that the ethical qualities of Greek melodies arose also from

(a) the steps used--quarter tones, semitones, etc.; (b) their arrangement and sequence; (c) whether the scale appears in a medium altitude or transposed up or downward by a fourth or a fifth or an octave; (d) certain melodic turns; and (e) the tempo and mobility.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, the ethos which was attributed to classical melodies arose as the result of a conscious, artistic effort on the part of composers. Cleonides' observation on the differences between intervals and systems furnishes additional sources of musical ethos about which we have, unfortunately, scant information. He writes that, in regard to systems,

the differences are seven. Four of these were found also in intervals; these are the differences in magnitude, in genus, of the symphonic and diaphonic, and of the rational and irrational. Three differences are peculiar to systems; these are the differences of the progression by step and by leap, of the conjunct and the disjunct, and of the non-modulating and the modulating.<sup>36</sup>

In postulating the various factors which may have contributed to the classical association of mode and ethos, it is perhaps best to take a position similar to that of Eric Blom, who said, in reference to the subject of modal dialects, "this subject, and that of the relationship of mode and key, are controversial and must remain so in the absence of adequate documentation."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>36</sup>Cleonides, On Harmonic Introduction; quoted in Strunk, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup>Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Ed. Eric Blom, Vol. III, p. 771; henceforth referred to as Grove's Dictionary.

## Chapter 3

### THE LITERARY BIAS

For many years the doctrine has been taught by theatre historians that Greek music, whatever it may have been, was subservient to speech. Musicologists have gone so far as to say that the pattern of vocal melodies was determined by the natural inflection of the Greek language.<sup>38</sup> Others have tried to relegate the role of music in the classical theatre to that of an accompaniment rather than conceiving of it as a vital part of the dramatic performance. In so doing they have placed upon the written text an emphasis which is disproportionate, if not unwarranted. For example, in The Dramatic Festivals of Athens, Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge says,

There can be no doubt that the music, or at least the musical accompaniment, was strictly subordinate to the words. Pratinas' protest against the attempt to give predominance to the flute implies this. Indeed it was essential that the words should be heard clearly throughout the vast theatre . . . and it must have been necessary even for singers in unison (as ancient Greek singers always sang) to spend infinite pains on the enunciation of the words.<sup>39</sup>

This attempt to exalt the spoken word at the expense of every other aspect of the dramatic performance has led a few to take the extreme position that speech and, in particular, poetry governed not only the meter and melody of the music used in the drama but, to a certain

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<sup>38</sup>"The sequence of notes paid attention to the natural inflection of the Greek language, rising on an acute accent and, with less consistency, rising or falling on a grave or a circumflex." (Sachs, Our Musical Heritage, p. 27.)

<sup>39</sup>Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, The Dramatic Festivals of Athens, p. 265.



extent, even the choice of mode! Typical of such a position is the following statement:

Because modes were distinguished from each other by patterns of small and large intervals between individual tones, the pitch pattern of some poetry demanded a particular mode.<sup>40</sup>

To establish these views as representative of an extreme position, one need only examine the evidence which points to the existence in classical Greece of music as an artistic entity in its own right, i.e. as separate and apart from its association with speech.

The earliest of such evidence comes from a most unlikely source in that its proponent, Plato, was one of those who insisted that music be subordinated to speech and, in the same sense, that instrumental music be employed primarily as an accompaniment to song. In the Laws (II:669), Plato writes,

Our poets divorce melody and rhythm from words, by their employment of kithara and aulos without vocal accompaniment, though it is the hardest of tasks to discover what such wordless rhythm and tune signify. . . . Nay, we are driven to the conclusion that all this so popular employment of kithara and aulos, not subordinated to the control of dance or song for the display of speed and virtuosity, and the reproduction of the cries of animals, is in the worst of bad taste.<sup>41</sup>

In speaking out against the practices of contemporary instrumentalists, regardless of how widespread those practices were, Plato unwittingly left posterity the testimony that the music of his day was not so strongly wedded to speech as more recent scholars would have us believe. Moreover, the vehemence of his protest may be an indication that he feared the effects of this virtuosity in instrumental music.

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<sup>40</sup>May Burton, A Study of Music as an Integral Part of the Spoken Drama in the American Professional Theatre: 1930-1955, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup>Sachs, The History of Musical Instruments, p. 129.

The fact that it was also the poets, and not the instrumentalists alone, who were making these musical innovations suggests that the poets recognized the independence of musical forms and made use of those forms to convey nonverbal meanings to their audiences. Such an inference acquires strength when it is associated with the ethical theory of the modes. Since classical Greece believed so strongly in the power of music to arouse ethical states and attributes by means of modes, melodic patterns, and rhythms, it seems unlikely that the poets would have tried to limit that power by making it exclusively dependent on the pitch accent of speech. Unless meaning existed in melody in its own right, and without the added interpretative value of the spoken word, the ethos of certain musical entities could not have held. As a matter of fact, there is no good reason why the Greeks should have felt obliged to favor the spoken idiom more than the musical, unless it was for the sake of intelligibility. Arthur E. Haigh, in a study of Greek poetic diction, has shown that intelligibility was really not a problem, and he states,

Greek poetry, as many critics have pointed out, though unsurpassed for the truthfulness and simplicity of its general tone, was elaborate and artificial in form. It was written for the most part in a conventional sort of diction, widely removed from the ordinary language of the people. . . . Greek tragedy forms no exception to the general tendency. . . . Indeed, the language of the Attic stage is even more artificial in texture than that of the other species of Greek poetry. The sources from which it is derived are more various; and the curious intermixture of different dialects in the same composition stamps it with a peculiar and exceptional character. . . . The ordinary tragic dialogue is written in Attic. But the Attic employed is far more archaic than that which was spoken in common life, and recalls an earlier stage in the history of the language. . . . Hence in the fifth century there had come to be a marked divergence between the speech of an Athenian citizen and the speech of the Ionic tribes of Asia Minor.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>A. E. Haigh, The Tragic Drama of the Greeks, pp. 364, 365.

At the same time, the doctrine of musical ethos makes it quite clear that classical Greece regarded music as an imitative or mimetic form of art. That its success at imitation did not hinge on words or speech alone is evident in a statement taken from Aristotle's Politics:

Musical times and tunes provide us with images of states of character--images of anger, and of calm; images of fortitude and temperance, and of all the forms of their opposites; images of the other states--which come closer to their actual nature than anything else can do. This is a fact which is clear from our own experience; to listen to these images is to undergo a real change of the soul. Now to acquire a habit of feeling pain or taking delight in an image is something closely allied to feeling pain or taking delight in the actual reality.<sup>43</sup>

Such imitation was effected through the use of melodic formulas which were regarded as being suitable for specific purposes or occasions--not for specific texts. At least, this seems to be the import of the following passage from Plato's Laws, which states,

Among us . . . music was divided into various classes and styles; one class of song was that of prayers to the gods, which bore the name of "hymns"; contrasted with this was another class, best called "dirges"; "paeans" formed another; and yet another was the "dithyramb," named, I fancy, after Dionysus. "Nomes" also were so called as being a distinct class of song; and these were further described as "citharoedic nomes." So these and other kinds being classified and fixed, it was forbidden to set one kind of words to a different class of tune.<sup>44</sup>

The implication of the above passage, however unintentional it might have been, is that the musical form took precedence over the literary--at least to the degree that the poet, as he composed his lyrics, was constrained to keep uppermost in his mind the melodic alternatives which were open to him. This limitation may have accounted for the close association of music and poetry which has been cited by the scholars. It may also

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<sup>43</sup>Aristotle, The Politics VIII.v.18-19, Tr. Ernest Barker.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Reese, pp. 11-12.



help to explain why the greatest of Greek tragedians were musicians as well as poets. One had to be a poet-musician in order to comprehend the complexities of melopoeia, which, according to Aristoxenus, was "the science of the use of musical material" or the means of determining "which class of melody is adapted to any particular subject."<sup>45</sup>

Further evidence which supports the theory that the music of classical Greece was regarded as a legitimate art in itself is supplied by an investigation of the structure of choral lyrics used in the drama. Amy Dale, in commenting on the "measure of likeness, and also the kind of difference, between the metres of dialogue and recitative on the one hand and those compounded with song, or song and dance, on the other," states,

The conventional nature of many metrical principles discernible in the latter, unrelated to the sense of the words or the rhythms of prose, indicates that here is the element introduced by music, or at least characteristic of poetry written to be sung as distinct from spoken poetry. (*Italics mine.*)<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, after examining the strophes and antistrophes of choral odes, she remarks,

Since strophe and antistrophe pay no attention to correspondence of word-accent, either the melody here must also have ignored word-accent or the melody of the strophe was not repeated in the antistrophe. . . . The former is the more generally assumed, and on a priori grounds appears the more likely. . . .

On the whole, then, there is no cogent reason for rejecting the assumption, with its a priori likelihood, that the music repeated from strophe to antistrophe in the choruses of drama. Antistrophic verse would thus acquire an added formality in that unlike strophic it took no account at all of the rise and fall of pitch in the same words delivered in the speaking voice.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Aristoxenus, Cf. Macran's notes, pp. 266, 267.

<sup>46</sup>Amy Dale, Lyric Metres of the Greek Drama, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 194, 196.

Miss Dale's conclusion corresponds with the view expressed in what is undoubtedly the best existing proof of the priority of classical melody over poetry, namely, Dionysius of Halicarnassus' observation that "in the Orestes of Euripides the music did not rise and fall with the speech-accents," and that "in two paired verses, strophe and antistrophe, the melody must be identical."<sup>48</sup> It would appear that this statement can be taken as authentic since Dionysius admitted that in his own time the situation was precisely the opposite; i.e. in the first century before Christ, "music normally followed the rise and fall of speech."<sup>49</sup>

With the above evidence indicating that there is at least another side of the question to be more thoroughly examined, what accounts for the singular insistence of classical scholars on the verbal, as opposed to the musical, idiom? This emphasis might be attributed to the fact that the written texts are all that have come down to us from the fifth century theatre. The music which was indisputably a part of that theatre was not written down with an eye toward preservation; consequently, it was the first element of performance to perish. Our knowledge of that music, as Pickard-Cambridge points out, begins for the most part at a period which was largely unfamiliar with the choral odes of Greek drama. As a result, those odes were considered to be superfluous to the essence of the drama. In the meantime, with the ascendancy of the solo actor and the simultaneous minimizing of the chorus, it is only natural to expect that the music which was intended for the respective agents would have undergone a considerable change, a change which would have assigned

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<sup>48</sup>Cited in New Oxford History of Music, Ed. Egon Wellesz, Vol. I, p. 337.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 374-75.

greater prominence to the utterances of the single actor. The first logical consequence of movements in this direction would have entailed a preference for lyrical monodies rather than choral odes and, eventually, either the elimination of music altogether or its relegation to a subordinate role in the drama.



## Chapter 4

### MUSICAL FORMS AND INNOVATIONS

The categories of melody which Plato mentioned in his Laws seem to be fairly representative of the musical forms which prevailed in the fifth century B. C. His definitions, however, often indicate either that he mistook the characteristics of one class for those of another or that the lines of demarcation between classes were not rigidly drawn. Although none of the extant melodies can be dated back to the classical period, descriptions which have been preserved in literary sources seem to indicate that, even though the formal categories were maintained, there was nevertheless great flexibility in the melodies which were ascribed to those categories, with the result that the characteristics of one musical form were often found in another. This flexibility was encouraged, perhaps, by the close affinity which professional music bore to folk music. Indeed, Reese, in speaking of the evidences of this relationship in the works of pre-classical lyric poets, says,

He [Archilochus of Paros, a seventh century poet] may have drawn some of his inspiration from folk-song. The apparently widespread folk-art is mentioned in literary remains which tell us of all manner of work-songs--songs for stamping barley, treading grapes, spinning wool; songs for rope-makers, drawers of water, watchmen, shepherds. Also inspired by the folk-influence, perhaps, were the lyric works of the somewhat later poet-musicians of Lesbos--Sappho, Alkaïos, and Anakreon.<sup>50</sup>

Other musicologists have found correspondences between the folk

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<sup>50</sup> Reese, pp. 13-14.

music of present-day Greece and that of Hellenic times. Eric Blom, for example, mentions the following types of contemporary Greek folk music:

religious, patriotic, heroic, amatory, farewell and nuptial songs, lullabies, dirges, pastorals, songs for specific work on the mountains or in the fields, at home or at sea, songs of the seasons, songs connected with popular and national customs and legends, songs of humour, laudatory and carousal songs, games, feasting-songs (sung during popular banquets, which, according to very old customs, are held to celebrate a marriage), etc.<sup>51</sup>

He then proceeds to associate this modern music with its ancient prototype by saying,

It is not difficult to recognize in many of these customs and songs the survival of several traits of the old Hellenic life. We know that the ancient Greeks also had special songs during their symposia (paroinia, skolia). They had songs for various kinds of work (ioylos or oylos sung during sowing, lityverses during harvest, epilenia during the pressing of grapes, etc.); also nuptial songs (hymenaios), lamentations (linos, ialenos) sung either for a beloved dead or for a symbolical loss or disappearance of a god or goddess (Adonis, Persephone), and so on.<sup>52</sup>

In regard to subject matter, then, it is evident that there are many correspondences between neo-Hellenic and ancient folk music, on the one hand, and between ancient folk and professional music, on the other. Subsequent pages of this chapter will demonstrate the analogies which can be detected in the form and structure of these musical genres. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to examine the respective types of music which seem to have had some relevance to the classical theatre.

Of the two general categories, solo and choral music, the latter merits our attention most because it is unlike anything which can be found in the theatre today. Modern directors are usually inclined either to dismiss the choral odes of Greek tragedy as an impediment to the action of the drama or to regard them as passive, transitional devices which

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<sup>51</sup>Grove's Dictionary, p. 268.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

have no motivating force in themselves and serve merely as reflections of the positions taken by the major characters. An acquaintance with the various forms of choral lyric, however, suggests that the role of the chorus in the classical theatre was by no means confined to the formal odes structured by the playwright, but that it involved a direct and continuous participation in the action of the drama from beginning to end. That being the case, the chorus may well have served as a vicarious agent which related the meaning of the dramatic action to the lives of the spectators. What, then, were these categories of choral lyric, and how were they implemented into the dramatic performance?

Hymns. The hymn technically was a song sung to the gods and accompanied by the lyre or kithara. T. A. Sinclair classifies hymns as prosodiac, i.e. "sung by a chorus in procession," and stationary.<sup>53</sup> But in the latter classification he makes the same mistake that the scholiasts made in their commentary on Aristotle. With reference to this error, Dale writes,

The scholiasts--admittedly of unknown date--are found to have been misled by the Aristotelian term stasimon for all odes subsequent to the parodos or "coming-on song"; these were "stationary" merely in the sense that the chorus had finished its progressive movement and taken up its stance in the orchestra, but the scholiasts clearly thought that the term implied "standing still"; i.e. an ode unaccompanied by dancing.<sup>54</sup>

Evidently hymns could take the form of praise and thanksgiving or they could be invocatory in nature. The most extensive musical fragment which has come down to us from ancient Greece is one known as the "First Delphic Hymn." Although it dates only from about 138 B. C., its style,

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<sup>53</sup>T. A. Sinclair, A History of Classical Greek Literature from Homer to Aristotle, p. 108.

<sup>54</sup>Dale, p. 200.

nevertheless, is reminiscent of music of the fifth century B. C. in its employment of archaic tunings, its modulation from one mode to another, its frequent use of chromatic progressions, and its alternating conjunct and disjunct structure. Because the third section of this hymn is incomplete, only the first two sections are reproduced here.

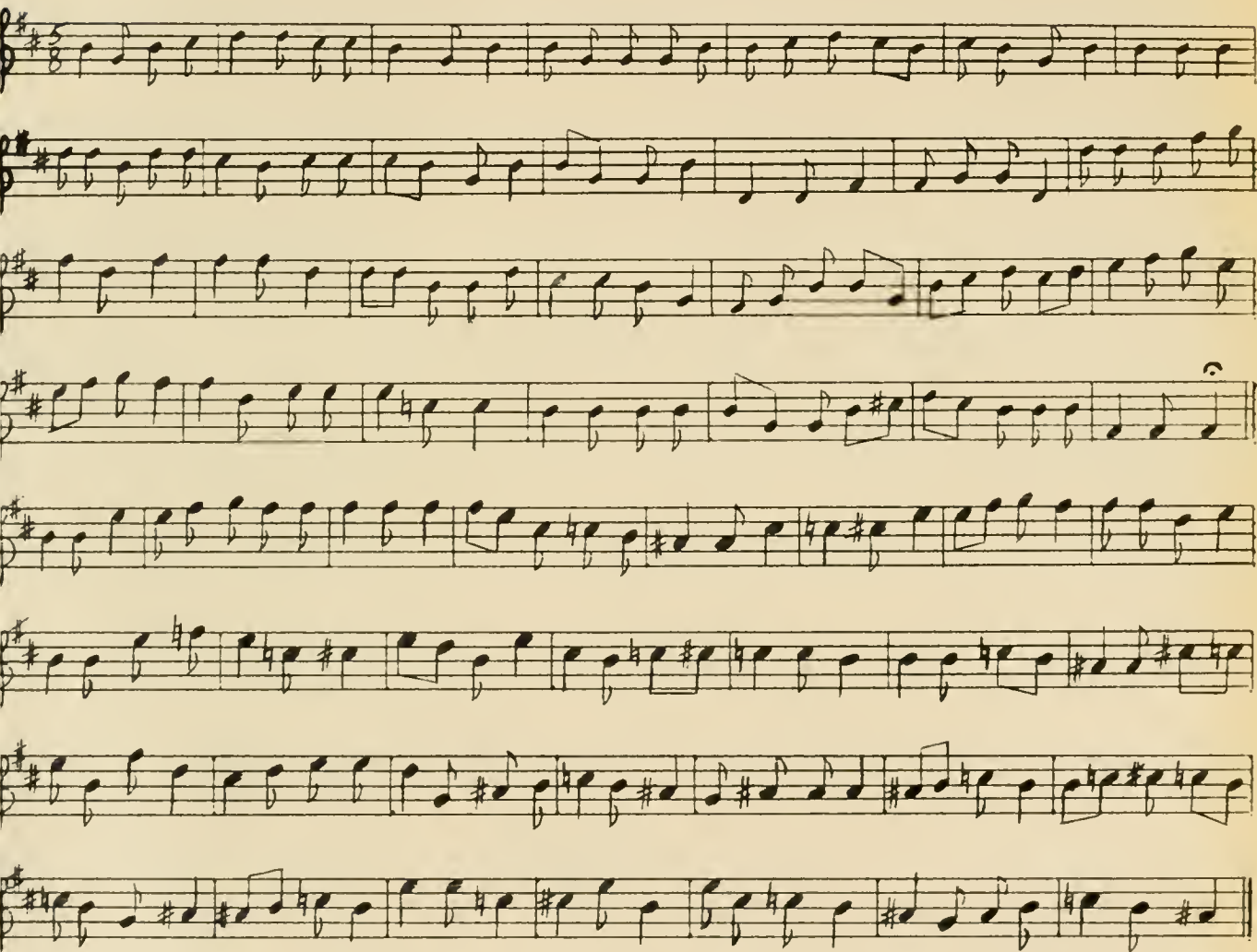


Fig. 2. - The First Delphic Hymn<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Historical Anthology of Music, Archibald T. Davison and Willi Apel, Eds., p. 9; henceforth referred to as Historical Anthology.



Even in this brief fragment, one cannot ignore the peculiarities of the archaic or enharmonic style. If, as Aristoxenus asserted, the enharmonion was "the noblest of all styles," then it is obvious that in ancient Greece the concept of nobility and dignity was far different from that which prevails today. This connotative difference is important when considering the aesthetic of the classical theatre, since it helps avoid a presentation of classical concepts based on attitudes and prejudices which are essentially Hellenistic.

As an example of the Hellenistic bias, A. E. Haigh distinguishes hymns which were directed to Apollo from those which were sung to Dionysus by saying that the former were dignified, symmetrical in structure, and regular in rhythm, whereas the latter were precisely the opposite. But the "First Delphic Hymn," which is addressed to Apollo, shows a structure which is anything but symmetrical. Its first section is in the Phrygian mode, while the second section is Hyper-Mixolydian; the tonality of the first section is distinctly enharmonic, while that of the succeeding section is chromatic. Supplementing this contrast in structure is an irregular rhythm known as cretic, which alternates between three-and two-beat feet to create a quintuple measure. Even if this musical fragment did not exist as evidence that irregular rhythms played a great part in the music of ancient Greece, it would be possible to find such testimony in the statements of Plutarch.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the enharmonic and chromatic genera, although frowned upon by ascetics like Plato, are known to have been employed in theatrical and professional performances of the fifth century B. C. Since it is a known fact that the latter half of the fifth

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<sup>56</sup>Plutarch, On Music; Cf. Lyra Graeca, Ed. J. M. Edmonds, Vol. I, pp. 7-9.



century was an era of musical experimentation, the possibility is not at all remote that these two styles were combined within single compositions. While such experimentation was enthusiastically received by some--Euripides, for example--it was ridiculed and satirized by others, notably, Aristophanes and Pherecrates. Unfortunately, the Hellenistic abandonment of the enharmonic genus, with its characteristic microtones, led Aristoxenus, the preeminent musical theorist of the fourth century B. C., to assume that it had never played a very important role in the music of classical Greece. Scholars of the nineteenth century, following in the footsteps of Aristoxenus, went on to maintain that Greek singers could never have reproduced intervallic differences which were so minute and required such delicacy of hearing. Some of these scholars, as Sachs points out, were led to declare that the "so-called quarter tones might merely have been symbols to indicate portamento."<sup>57</sup> In the face of this critical short-sightedness, there exists Ptolemy's dictum, "sliding tones are the enemies of melody," Aristides Quintilianus' chronological listing of the three genera as "enharmonic-chromatic-diatonic," and Plutarch's lament that "our contemporaries have thoroughly neglected the finest genus, to which the ancients devoted all their eagerness" (i.e. the enharmonic).<sup>58</sup>

Among the general category of hymns was a specific type which had inherent possibilities for dramatic development. Although Menander referred to this species as "genealogic hymns," it is quite likely that he had the dithyramb in mind. The dithyramb was a hymn devoted to a particular god, originally Dionysus, and it described in song the birth of the god, various episodes from his life, and his outstanding attributes.

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<sup>57</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 207.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 206-207.

It differed from hymns in general in its exclusive employment of the Phrygian mode and its use of the aulos rather than the kithara or lyre. Accompanied by mimetic dance and complex rhythms, it was capable of expressing a variety of emotions. According to Haigh, however, it is uncertain whether it was serious or comic in nature. By the time of Aristotle the dithyramb had changed so in form that the antistrophic structure which had once prevailed had disappeared, and the spoken dialogue had been excised so that the form was regarded as a purely musical one. Yet, in speaking of the earlier dithyramb, Aristotle expressed himself in such a way that it is hard to escape the inference that he was equating the dithyramb with the drama. Haigh says, at this point,

He [Aristotle] tells us that the solemnity of tragedy was a later development, and that the earlier performances were "satyric" in tone, and characterized by comic diction, sprightly metres, and pantomimic gesture. In the face of these statements it is impossible to describe the early dithyramb as a sad and melancholy composition.<sup>59</sup>

Changes which took place in the dithyramb are analogous to those changes which Plato decried in professional music as a whole during the latter part of the fifth century B. C. Antistrophic form was sacrificed to irregular meters, words were subordinated to music, sound was emphasized at the expense of sense, and attempts were made at musical impersonations of such natural phenomena as thunderstorms and rushing rivers.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the dithyramb, which probably bore the closest semblance to the drama, there were prayers and paeans. These were theoretically classified as hymns; yet paeans, as mentioned earlier, undoubtedly originated in a different source from that of hymns in general.

Paianon, as Sachs points out, meant "healer."

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<sup>59</sup>Haigh, p. 21.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

It originally was a medicine dance and later, more generally, a chorus dance in honor of Apollo, the healing God. As early a source as the Iliad describes a paeon to ban the plague, and several centuries later, when the plague raged in Sparta, the governing board appointed the Cretan musician, Thaletas, to organize paeans.<sup>61</sup>

Paeans cannot be dismissed, however, by merely relegating them to the Apollonian cult. If they were associated with healing, then it is probable that they, like the dithyramb, were highly ecstatic in nature. Thus, they may well be the form of music described by Diogenes, the tragic poet, when he says, in his Semele,

And yet I hear that the turban-wearing women of Asian Cybele, the daughters of the rich Phrygians, with drums and bull-roarers and booming of bronze cymbals in their two hands make loud din . . . celebrating her who is the wise minstrel of the gods and healer as well. And I hear that the Lydian and Bactrian maidens dwelling beside the Halys river worship the goddess of Tmolus, Artemis, in her laurel-shaded grove the while they, 'mid plucking of triangles and pectides, thrum the magadis in responsive twanging, where also the flute, in Persian fashion, joins its welcome concord to the chorus.<sup>62</sup>

Hymns, then, may be understood to have included processional, invocations, dithyrambs, prayers, and paeans. These types seem to exhaust the possibilities of sacred, as opposed to secular, choral lyric. Several kinds of secular music remain yet to be discussed.

Dirges. The dirge or lament, according to J. M. Edmonds, originated in early ritual song-dance and thus was strongly associated with hieratic elements. As it gradually became secularized, it dispensed with the dance and eventually became separated from melic, or "tune-poetry." It was still sung, however, as it always had been, to the accompaniment of

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<sup>61</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 267.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists, Tr. Charles Burton Gulick, Vol. VI, pp. 431-33; henceforth referred to as Athenaeus.

the aulos.<sup>63</sup> A passage from the closing pages of The Iliad indicates the nature of the dirge as it describes the funeral lament over the body of Hector:

When he had been brought home, they laid him out on a bier, and posted beside him mourners to lead the dirge, who sang their lamentable dirge while the women wailed in chorus. Andromache laid her white arms about the head of her dead warrior, and led the lament:

.....  
 So Andromache spoke weeping, and the women wailed in chorus.  
 Then Hecabe led the lament amid her sobs:

.....  
 So Hecabe spoke weeping, and the women wailed long in chorus.  
 Helen came third and led the lament:

.....  
 So she spoke weeping, and the people wailed long and loud.

.....  
 Then they put oxen and mules to their wagons and assembled before the city. Nine days they gathered infinite quantities of wood; when the tenth day dawned, they carried out brave Hector weeping, and laid the body on the pile and set it on fire.<sup>64</sup>

In view of a commentary by Fivos Anoyanakis on a recent recording of neo-Hellenic folk song, it appears evident that the Homeric description was more than simply a literary convention. One of the types included on the record is listed as "Moirologhia" (threnodies). Certain elements of this music seem to have been retained since Homeric times, e.g. the laments are sung by women mourners, and the threnody takes the form of a choral round in which a sad, slow dance is performed around the bier or grave of the deceased. Of the singers and instrumentalists who made the recording, Anoyanakis remarks,

With the exception of Dora Stratou, the Director of the Group [the Royal Greek Festival Company], no member of "Panegyris" has had

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<sup>63</sup>Elegy and Iambus, Ed. J. M. Edmonds, Vol. I, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Homer, The Iliad, Tr. W. H. D. Rouse, pp. 296, 297.



any musical education beyond that handed down from father to son. The result is that this music is performed as it was centuries ago.<sup>65</sup>

In The Republic Plato makes an unusual observation with respect to the dirge. Speaking of those types of music which were appropriate for instruments, he says, "but we said we did not require dirges and lamentations in words." (Italics mine.)<sup>66</sup> The implication here is that the dirge was so distinctive a musical genre that it did not depend on language as a primary means of expression. It could be rendered just as effectively by instruments as by the human voice. Part of that distinction may have been due to the choice of mode and genus in which the dirge was composed. Plutarch preserves a statement of Aristoxenus which indicates that Olympus, the aulos-player, selected the Lydian mode for his lament for the serpent Python.<sup>67</sup> In another place Plutarch refers to the Mixolydian mode in a way that lends support to the belief that it, too, was a favorite medium for laments.

Euripides the poet one day at a rehearsal instructing the chorus in a part that was set to a serious air, one of the company unexpectedly fell out laughing. "Sir," said Euripides, "unless you were very stupid and insensible, you could not laugh while I sing in the grave Mixolydian mode."<sup>68</sup>

In the previously mentioned recording, the singer is confined to the lowest register of the female voice, and she sings a plaintive, diatonic melody which is based on only the first tetrachord of the ancient Hypodorian mode. Against the constant drone of a reed instrument, a clarinet accompanies her, duplicating the melody almost note for note. When

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<sup>65</sup>Greek Folk Songs and Dances, Counterpoint Recordings; Cf. Notes by Fivos Anoyanakis.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. Strunk, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup>A. M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History, p. 7.

the voice stops, however, the clarinet takes on an entirely different character. Then the range of melody is expanded to include the full Hypodorian octave, the genus shifts from diatonic to enharmonic (with its microtonic intervals), and there is a series of tumbling roulades in the higher register of the clarinet which imparts an incongruous ecstatic element to the lament. Although this song is performed by a solo singer rather than by a leader and chorus, as in the case of the lament in The Iliad, one cannot help wondering if the solo voice has taken over a function which was formerly assumed by the chorus, i.e. preserving the formal structure within which the improvisations of the leader can occur. If this has happened, then one could also surmise that the instrumentalist now performs the improvisations which were once performed by the leader of the chorus.

This form, with its successive improvisations set within a formal sequence of responses or refrains, is by no means peculiar to a particular age and time. It prevails today in the litanies of various Christian liturgies. Nor is the form peculiar to the lament. F. M. Cornford has shown that the same form lent itself quite naturally to a lighter genre of song known as encomia.<sup>69</sup> Included in the encomia were epithalamia (marriage songs), pyrrhic songs of victory, skolia (drinking rounds), and the processional songs of children. In the Birds of Aristophanes there is a remnant of a refrain--tenella kallinike--which was often used in the victory song. In explanation of this expression the scholiasts tell us,

The word "threefold" is used because they shouted the word kallinike thrice, that is not thrice in immediate succession, but the strophe

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<sup>69</sup>F. M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy, p. 105.

is threefold and the refrain repeated with each. But according to Eratosthenes the chant of Archilochus is not really a victory-song but a hymn to Heracles, and the word "threefold" does not refer to its being composed of three strophes, but because the word kallinike was used three times as a refrain. With regard to the word tenella we are told by Eratosthenes that when the flute-player or lyre-player was not present the chorus-leader took it up and spoke it "outside of the song," and then the chorus of revellers joined in with kallinike, and thus came the combination tenella kallinike. The song begins "O hail victorious, etc."<sup>70</sup>

Our only musical indication of what the encomia may have sounded like is the "Skolion" of Seikilos, which has been dated almost anywhere within the period from the second century B. C. to the second century A. D.

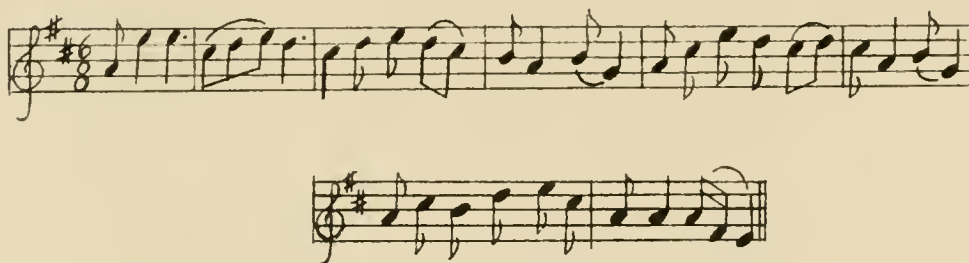


Fig. 3. - The Skolion of Seikilos<sup>71</sup>

This fragment suggests nothing of the kind of structure which entails a reciprocal action between a leader and a chorus or between an improvised verse and a formal refrain. Its melody, however, is distinctly modal, which implies a pre-Hellenistic origin. In addition, it is simple and easily sung, and it is set to a rollicking triple measure. These factors may indicate that the composer adapted his text to a well known, possibly preexistent melody in order to engender an immediate popular appeal.

Nomes. In addition to the varieties of choral lyric which have

<sup>70</sup>Elegy and Iambus, Vol. II, pp. 175-77.

<sup>71</sup>Historical Anthology, p. 10.

been discussed, a particular species of solo music known as nomos had some bearing on the theatre in that it was intended for professional performances before the Olympian audiences. Nomes are known to have prevailed in Greece as early as the Homeric period. They took the form of short, traditional, melodic phrases which were repeated extensively by early bards as they strummed their phorminxes and chanted the legendary deeds of heroes. These early nomes appear to have contributed "a repertoire of 'law-giving,' fundamental melodic and rhythmic types which might be worked over by musicians into something more or less new. . . . [They] had no specific musical form common to all, but the division into a definite number of 'movements' was essential."<sup>72</sup> In the seventh century B. C. Terpander of Lesbos, the earliest historical figure of Greek music, altered the scope of the nome and made it more elaborate by increasing the number of its sections to seven. Apel records that another seventh century figure, Archilochus, contributed further innovations in the form of triple rhythms, quicker tempi, and perhaps folklike elements.<sup>73</sup> Whereas nomes were at first vocal pieces accompanied by stringed instruments, Plutarch tells us that as early as the seventh century B. C., Olympus the Phrygian introduced a type of nome which was intended for the aulos alone, and that this new nome won popular acceptance by the Greeks at the festivals of their gods.<sup>74</sup> Thus began the reign of professional art music in Greece, a reign in which the quivering, ecstatic, Asiatic aulos played a conspicuous part.

The pseudo-Aristotelian Problems states that nomes, in contrast

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<sup>72</sup>Reese, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup>Harvard Dictionary, p. 302.

<sup>74</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 5.



to choric songs, were astrophic in form. In a sense, then, the nome can be regarded as a precursor of the lyrical monody sung by the solo actor. That a good bit of freedom and improvisation were inherent in such music is indicated by the following passage:

Why were "nomes" not composed in antistrophes like all other songs, that is, choric songs? Is it because the "nomes" were assigned to virtuosi, and as these were already able to imitate different characters and sustain their parts, the songs composed for them became long and elaborate? Like the words, therefore, the music conformed to the imitation, becoming constantly different; for it was more essential for the music to be imitative than the words.<sup>75</sup>

The only nome to have preserved its words, "The Persae" of Timotheus, seems to imply the superiority of the music over the words. According to E. S. Forster, it "resembles the meaningless libretto of an inferior opera and must have depended for its effect on the music and the mimetic powers of the performer."<sup>76</sup>

Toward the middle of the fifth century B. C. a musical revolution took place in Athens and ushered in an era of experimentation in which the distinctions between various styles, modes, and genera were blurred. Plato, writing a century later, described the previous revolution in terms which indicate his preference for the earlier and more easily categorized forms of music. In this instance he noted,

Our music was once divided into its proper forms. . . . It was not permitted to exchange the melodic styles of these established forms and others. Knowledge and informed judgment penalized disobedience. There were no whistles, unmusical mob-noises, or clapping for applause. The rule was to listen silently and learn; boys, teachers, and the crowd were kept in order by threat of the stick. . . . But later, an unmusical anarchy was led by poets who had natural talent, but were ignorant of the laws of music. Over-intoxicated with love of pleasure, they mixed their drinks--dirges with hymns, paeans with dithyrambs--and imitated aulos-music in their kitharoedic song. Through foolishness they deceived themselves into thinking that there

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<sup>75</sup>Problemata XIX.918<sup>b</sup>

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

was no right or wrong way in music--that it was to be judged good or bad by the pleasure it gave. By their works and their theories they infected the masses with the presumption to think themselves adequate judges. So our theatres, once silent, grew vocal, and aristocracy of music gave way to a pernicious theatrocracy--for had it been a free democracy, it would have been nothing to fear. As it was, the criterion was not music, but a reputation for promiscuous cleverness and a spirit of law-breaking.<sup>77</sup>

Plato's main objection to the innovations of the previous century was directed at the basis on which those changes were made, namely, the "love of pleasure," a force that he felt was diametrically opposed to the idealized, ethical society that he advocated. Classical experimentalism had occurred not only in the structure of music but in the instrumental means whereby it was presented to the public. Prior to the fifth century there had been a fairly predictable degree of uniformity in instrumentation. A musical hierarchy had prevailed in which the kithara and lyre stood supreme in the realm of soloistic music and the aulos dominated the field of choral lyric. While there had of course been exceptions to this dichotomy, the fifth century brought an end to the hierarchy, and the kithara ceded first place to the aulos as the preeminent nationalistic instrument. The name of the aulete was not only included in the didascalia (the catalogue of plays with their respective names and dates), but eventually it was placed ahead of that of the playwright! Moreover, a complex sort of orchestration began to appear in which reeds, lyres, cymbals, brass, and percussion were combined in performance.<sup>78</sup>

Plato's resentment toward these changes may be considered as representative of a conservative school to which Aristophanes and Pherokrates belonged. These two men were so outspoken in their criticism of

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<sup>77</sup>Quoted in New Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, p. 395.

<sup>78</sup>Lang, pp. 18, 19.

the "new music" that they used their plays as vehicles for caricaturing and ridiculing it. As an example of this musical satire, Wellesz offers the following description of the approach taken by Aristophanes:

Although Aristophanes' musical parodies are lost, his verbal metaphors are vivid and illuminating. He defines the style by contrast with the early classics. The new music was no longer virile, taut, entonos--well tuned and unwavering; it was marked by flamboyant kampai ("bends") and by a formless flexibility of melodic line. [Cf. Clouds 967ff.] It is not clear whether kampai were in fact modulations or decorative shakes, but Aristophanes certainly insists upon the tonal instability of this music. The modernist tragedian Agathon appears on the Aristophanic stage spreading out his strophae to melt in the sun: if cold, they will not bend. When he sings, his song is like the zigzagging of ants. [Thesmophoriazusae 66-192.] The new dithyrambists, ecstatic and effeminate creatures, are so easily bent that they have to wear stays. Their bodies are willowy; their souls after death go fluttering among the clouds in search of brand-new anabolae; their music is made of snowflakes and feathers eddying in the sky; they long to be birds. [Peace 839ff., Clouds 332ff., Birds 1372-1409.] Aristophanes is obviously alluding to the same new, sky-borne, fluttering manner when, in the Frogs, he burlesques Euripides' coloratura on the first syllable of the word for "twirling": ei-ei-ei-eilissousa. [Frogs 1314, 1348.]<sup>79</sup>

Pherekrates, in his turn, publicly denounced experimentalism in music by presenting on the stage, in the form of a violated virgin, Polyhymnia, the Muse of sacred lyric.<sup>80</sup>

Speculating on the reasons for this advent of experimentalism, one can distinguish several factors. For one thing, the rise of the new music coincided approximately with the beginning of the Peloponessian War between Sparta and Athens. Prior to this conflict, Dorian music (which was typically Spartan in its austerity and predictability) had enjoyed an era of unprecedented popularity in the realm of choral music. With the coming of war, however, it seems only natural that the Dorian virtues of

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<sup>79</sup>New Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, pp. 393-94.

<sup>80</sup>Lang, p. 19.



simplicity, rigidity, moderation, and discipline should have been questioned. Indeed, it is known that they were questioned by the architects and sculptors of the period, for the works of art produced by late fifth century artists contain a high degree of relativism in contrast to the stark idealism of earlier ages. Since the name "Dorian," to the Athenian, now had become synonymous with "alien" and "enemy," a decline in the popularity of Dorian music was only to be expected.<sup>81</sup>

It is worthy of mention that, considering the Athenian antipathy to Doric elements in music, the leaders of the new school were two non-Europeans, Phrynis of Mytilene and Timotheos of Miletus. Coming as they did from localities in or near Turkey and Asia Minor, these composers introduced into Athenian music elements which were essentially Asiatic, among them, chromaticism, vibrato, and florid orchestration. In the latter category, it is possible to point to at least two kinds of auloi which were known to the Athenians--Phrygian and Lydian pipes. These pipes were of different sizes and pitches. According to Sachs, the Greeks classified them as "parthenioi or 'girls'" pipes as sopranos; paidikoi or 'boys' pipes as altos; teleioi or 'perfect' pipes as tenors; hyperteleioi or 'superperfect' as basses. [And] There are many other names which are not yet understood."<sup>82</sup> The differences in quality and range supplied by these various auloi added a richness to Greek music which was previously unknown. Such diversity may well have tempted players of the kithara to try to achieve similar effects on stringed instruments. At any

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<sup>81</sup>Cf. the views of Thucydides in Toynbee, Greek Historical Thought, p. 42.

<sup>82</sup>Sachs, The History of Musical Instruments, p. 139. Classifying auloi according to pitch registers is supported by Aristoxenus, who prefers the term kitharisterioi for tenors and teleioi for baritones. Cf. Aristoxenus, p. 243.



rate, it is known that the school of Timotheos was criticized for mixing aulos music with kitharoedic song.

The fifth century B. C. not only brought about the general hostility of Athens toward Sparta and the Athenian preference for artistic influences from the Near East; it witnessed a public reaction to the Sophistic movement which had gained prominence. This movement, which challenged the validity of established beliefs and encouraged the skeptical view that there were two sides to every question, could easily have lent support to musical experiments by virtue of its claim that the individual orator, through innate talent and acquired skills, was capable of making the weaker argument seem the greater.

Finally, in the fifth century B. C. there evolved important improvements in the design and construction of both aulos and kithara. Innovations in the aulos provided for greater melodic range and fluidity of modulation between modes. In comparing the improved aulos with the previous type, Reese notes,

The number of holes, at first three or four, eventually grew to as many as fifteen, and bands that could be turned round on the tube were added to assist the fingers in closing holes not in use. Two writers state that the improvements of Pronomos, the teacher of Alcibiades (fl. fifth century B. C.), rendered Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian scales all playable on one pair of pipes, whereas previously a separate pair had been used for each. Double-pipes made possible the playing of a melody simultaneously with either a drone . . . or simple accompaniment. Aristoxenos states that the full compass of a single pipe or pair of pipes was over three octaves--the total range of the Greek scales as given by Alypius.<sup>83</sup>

At approximately the same time the number of strings on the lyre and kithara was increased from that of eight in the sixth century to as many as eleven and twelve in the fifth century. The following passage in the Ion

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<sup>83</sup>Reese, pp. 14-15.

of Euripides reflects the change:

Eleven-stringed lyre with thy flight of ten steps into the place  
where the three concordant roads of Harmonia meet, once all the  
Greeks raised but a meagre music, playing thee seven-toned four by  
four.<sup>84</sup>

It is not clear whether the extra strings represented additional notes or whether they were merely octave-duplications of the original tones. Apel is inclined to the latter view and suggests that a limited degree of stopping was possible "by merely pressing a finger against the string near its lower end. Thus, the pitch of a string could be raised a quarter-tone, a semitone or a whole-tone."<sup>85</sup> Sachs feels that the lyre, which was the instrument of the amateur musician, retained its archaic tuning even with the additional strings. It would therefore have been best suited to melodies based on the pentatonic scale of the Orient.

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<sup>84</sup>Cited in Elegy and Iambus, Vol. II, p. 433.

<sup>85</sup>Harvard Dictionary, p. 389.

## Chapter 5

### THE APOLLONIAN-DIONYSIAC DUALITY

With respect to misinterpreting the spirit of the classical theatre, too often there has been a willingness to accept without question such statements as the following:

It might be well if the revival of Greek plays in the modern theatre could be prohibited until the public had learnt to tolerate nothing more realistic than the masked and stylized, puppet-like, figures that trod, with stilted gait, the stage of Aeschylus and Euripides.<sup>86</sup>

A touch of the Philistine does sometimes show itself in Aristotle. But, though he is writing at a later period, the tendency which he observed began to rise quite early in the history of tragedy. The dialogue especially aims more and more at litotes and sapheneia, "plainness" and "lucidity." Tragedy becomes possessed by that form of the classical spirit which consists in self-restraint and sophrosyne.<sup>87</sup>

The foregoing passages ought to be recognized for what they really are, namely, the reflections of a long-standing desire to impose on classical culture an unwarranted one-sidedness. The desire has acquired intellectual respectability by virtue of its affinity with the views of Plato, Aristotle, and Aristoxenus, each of whom displayed a typical Hellenistic bias in the direction of rationalism. In regard to music, for example, Aristoxenus wrote,

The ultimate factor in every visible activity is the intellectual process. For this latter is the presiding and determining principle . . . We shall be sure to miss the truth unless we place the supreme and ultimate, not in the thing determined, but in the activity that determines.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Cornford, p. 178.

<sup>87</sup>Gilbert Murray, Aeschylus: The Creator of Tragedy, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup>Aristoxenus, p. 195.

Placing its ultimate emphasis on the "determining principle," however, is precisely what traditional scholarship has failed to do or, at least, has done insufficiently. Instead, it has foisted upon classical art, architecture, theatre, and music an arbitrary dichotomy which severs rational and logical processes from emotional and intuitive ones. The former faculties are in turn regarded as the attributes of Apollo, while the latter are held to stem from Dionysus. In the realm of music Sachs epitomizes this distinction exactly by saying,

Being Apollon's attribute, the lyre expressed the so-called Apollonian side of Greek soul and life, wise moderation, harmonious control and mental equilibrium, while the pipes stood for the Dionysian side, for inebriation and ecstasy.<sup>89</sup>

The fallacy of this dichotomizing is evident to one who considers the aesthetic properties of music. Since inspiration and catharsis are included among these properties, it is difficult to accept the argument that the intellect is the ultimate, determining activity in a work of art, and that music must therefore be regarded as a purely rational process. It was perhaps because Plato could neither comprehend nor cope with poetic ecstasy that he excluded the poet from his projected commonwealth. At least, the following conversation between Socrates and Glaucon, in The Republic, seems to contain such an implication.

S. But tell me this--can there be any communion between soberness and extravagant pleasure? . . . . .

G. By no means.

S. But is there between pleasure and insolence and license?

G. Most assuredly.

S. Do you know of greater or keener pleasure than that associated with Aphrodite?

G. I don't . . . nor yet of any more insane.

S. But is not the right love a sober and harmonious love of the orderly and the beautiful?

G. It is indeed . . .

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<sup>89</sup>Sachs, The History of Musical Instruments, p. 129.



S. Then nothing of madness, nothing akin to license, must be allowed to come nigh the right love? . . .

G. Even so . . .

S. Do you not agree, then, that our discourse on music has come to an end? It has certainly made a fitting end, for surely the end and consummation of culture is the love of the beautiful.<sup>90</sup>

The difficulty inherent in a view such as Plato espoused via his characters is that it encourages one to think of Greek music, and indirectly, of all art, in terms of polar extremes. By Plato's definition, music which was moderate, restrained, and well-ordered was good; conversely, that which tended to excess, freedom, and asymmetry was bad. One recognizes in such judgments the predisposition to evaluate music not in terms of its essence but in terms of its intention. In other words, what Plato and his successors refused to concede was that the only legitimate sphere in which the criticism of art can function is the aesthetic, not the ethical. Moreover, the realm of the aesthetic is wide in scope, embracing both moderation and excess, restraint and license, proportion and disproportion.

Warry suggests that what the views of Plato and Aristotle amounted to was a division of experience into conscious and subconscious states, in which conscious experience was compounded of rational and moral values, and the subconscious of emotional and aesthetic ones.<sup>91</sup> There is reason to believe, however, that such an attempt would have been alien to the spirit of classical Greece. The Greek citizen, it must be remembered, was accustomed to receiving rational and moral pronouncements which had evolved from ecstatic visions and oracular prophecies. Probably the most celebrated fount of wisdom and morality was the Oracle at Delphi,

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<sup>90</sup>Plato, The Republic III.403, Tr. Paul Shorey. The letters identifying the speakers in the dialogue have been my own addition.

<sup>91</sup>Warry, p. 150.

which bore the inscription "Know Thyself." Yet, the moral imperative which proceeded from this shrine was not the outcome of rational processes but of irrational ones. Robert Graves provides an insight to the nature of the procedure involved by saying,

The female celebrants of the Triple Goddess at Tempe had chewed laurel leaves to induce a poetic and erotic frenzy, as the Bacchicals chewed ivy . . . and when Apollo took over the Delphic oracle the Pythian priestess who continued in charge learned to chew laurel for oracular inspiration. The laurel had become sacred to Apollo . . . but he was now the God of Reason with the motto "nothing in excess," and his male initiates wore the laurel without chewing at it.<sup>92</sup>

A classic example of the way in which ethical pronouncements were made during the course of ecstatic experiences is found in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus. Cassandra, who had once spurned the advances of Apollo, ironically becomes his priestess and, whenever the god possesses her, she is transformed into a seer who interprets the portents of the future. In one scene she foretells the hideous murder of Agamemnon in such a way that it becomes an almost tangible experience for the chorus and audience. "Our souls are captivated by the suggestive power of this prophetic madness to such an extent that the terrible events perpetrated in the palace seem to us a nightmare, until Agamemnon's death cry calls us back to the reality of the play."<sup>93</sup>

The scene described illustrates the hypnotic seduction of the rational by the irrational, and it shows at once the inevitable breakdown of arbitrary categories such as the conscious and subconscious, the Apollonian and the Dionysiac. This breakdown occurs both in the realm of waking experience and in dream states, for, as Warry says,

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<sup>92</sup>Robert Graves, The White Goddess, pp. 434-35.

<sup>93</sup>Lang, p. 12.

Things which are formally beautiful or ugly . . . exercise a fascinating power; for that which focuses intellectual concentration . . . is in some sense hypnotic. There is no clear line of demarcation between the stimulation and the lulling of the intelligence. Awareness in one direction is achieved at the expense of abandon in another. Thus the approach to beauty may be subjective or objective.<sup>94</sup>

Nietzsche made much the same kind of observation on human endeavor when he wrote, "Much will have been gained for esthetics once we have succeeded in apprehending directly . . . that art owes its continuous evolution to the Apollonian-Dionysiac duality, even as the propagation of the species depends on the duality of the sexes, their constant conflicts and periodic acts of reconciliation."<sup>95</sup>

When one avoids the habitual inclination to regard Greek music as an art that fluctuated between two extremes--the one representing harmony and moderation and the other, disorder and excess--it is possible to approach a closer appreciation of the spirit of the music, if not its visible outlines. Indeed, when the music of the fifth century B. C. is viewed as an art form which exhibited a contrapuntal interplay of the two mainstreams of artistic expression, the rational and the intuitive, the seemingly incongruous statements of several ancient authors are immediately clarified. For example, Athenaeus, in speaking of the music of the "ancients" as a subject of philosophic reflection, said,

Taking it all together, it is plain that the ancient "wisdom" of the Greeks was given over especially to music. For this reason they regarded Apollo, among the gods, and Orpheus, among the demigods, as most musical and most wise; and they called all who followed this art sophists, as Aeschylus has done: "Then the sophist wildly struck his tortoise-shell lyre with notes discordant."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Warry, p. 150.

<sup>95</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music, Tr. Francis Golffing, p. 19.

<sup>96</sup>Cf. Strunk, p. 54.

From the traditional Apollonian perspective, the words "wildly" and "discordant" seem completely incompatible with the sophist, the lover of wisdom, who played the lyre, the theoretical instrument of Apollo. From the same perspective, it is almost impossible to comprehend the observation of Plutarch that "not only the lyre belongs to Apollo, but he is the inventor of flute-playing as well as lyre-playing."<sup>97</sup> (In this context the flute must be understood as referring to the aulos, for the horizontal flute was unknown in Greece until Hellenistic times.)

If the attributing of the aulos to Apollo seems strange to one who customarily thinks of Greek music in terms of mutually exclusive extremes, then the association of the lyre with Dionysus appears equally inappropriate. Nevertheless, Athenaeus records the following statement, which reputedly dates from the seventh century poet, Archilochus: "For I know how to lead off, in the lovely song of lord Dionysus, the dithyramb, when my wits have been stricken with the thunder-bolt of wine."<sup>98</sup> In this transcription the verb "to lead off" is a translation of a Greek word which was traditionally associated with the lyre rather than the aulos. A similar instance occurs in the Orations of Himerius, where reference is made to the "Great Reveller--as the lyre calls Dionysus--when the Muse-inspired poets lead him in the first dawn of Spring, crowned 'with Springtime blossoms' and ivy-clusters, now to the topmost heights of Caucasus and the valleys of Lydia, now to the crags of Parnassus and the Rock of Delphi."<sup>99</sup> A final example of the mixed references which are found in ancient sources is taken from the writings of Herodotus, the

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<sup>97</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 99.   <sup>98</sup>Cf. Strunk, p. 53.

<sup>99</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 299.



fifth century historian who visited Egypt. Herodotus was strongly impressed by the similarities between the Egyptian and Hellenic festivals of Dionysus and recorded the belief of the Egyptian priests that "the last God-King of Egypt had been Horus son of Osiris, whom the Hellenes call Apollo." In a critical comment on the Egyptian ritual, Herodotus established an inevitable connection between Apollo and Dionysus by pointing out that the Greek equivalent of "Osiris" was "Dionysus."<sup>100</sup>

The Apollonian-Dionysiac duality can be identified in three major aspects of Greek music. Specifically, it occurs in the symbolic functions of instruments and voices, in the nature of the music itself, and in the retention of many elements of folk ritual. Instruments, Sachs says, have a significance which transcends the production of sound as such and involves the subsidiary factors of shape, color, and substance. Originally, he continues,

instrumental music, at first remote from passion, began in general as a percussive act of the body: slapping the buttocks, the belly, the thighs, or clapping the hands, or stamping the ground. Its cause was a muscular urge concomitant to the nervous tension of those who sang or listened to singing; its aim was audible order.<sup>101</sup>

In other words, instrumental music derived its basic character from rhythmic impulses, whereas vocal music was primarily concerned with the free development of melodic forms. Instruments can therefore be regarded as preserving the rudimentary, elemental, sensuous aspects of music, while voices are held to be the most effective means by which the freedom of the human spirit overmasters "the daemonic element imported by such music."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Toynbee, p. 172.

<sup>101</sup>Sachs, The Wellsprings of Music, p. 92.

<sup>102</sup>Alfred Einstein, A Short History of Music, p. 10.

But the symbolism of instruments also extends to nonmusical areas. It exhibits the sexual dualism which was so much a part of primitive cultures and, particularly, of the Greek world. The impact of this dualism, Sachs explains,

has been so strong, essential and consistent on the human mind that the universe in all its manifestations, as planets, seasons, liquids, colors, numbers, pitches, seemed to be an interplay of male and female qualities. If in these cosmological juxtapositions the sun and daytime, blood, color red, odd numbers stood on the masculine side, the moon, and nighttime, milk and color white as well as even numbers stood on the feminine side.<sup>103</sup>

Accordingly, instruments such as the trumpet and pipes, by virtue of a shape which had definitely phallic connotations and a sound that was aggressive and menacing, acquired a masculine symbolism and function. By the same reasoning stringed instruments, among them the lyre and kithara of classical Greece, were assigned feminine characteristics.

They render a frail, subdued, and quite unaggressive sound so weak that some resonance cavity is necessary to make it audible to others--a pit in the ground, an earthen vessel, a gourd, or even the player's mouth; and this resonator gives them a womb-like cavity. They are allotted intimate, introvert roles.<sup>104</sup>

An understanding of this apparently universal symbolism necessitates a reappraisal of the traditional dichotomy which Platonic thought imposed on Greek music. If the dogmatic assignment of the lyre to Apollo and the aulos to Dionysus is accepted, it becomes rather difficult to explain the fact that Apollo, the son of Zeus and the preeminent deity of patriarchal religion, preferred an instrument which was essentially feminine in nature. On the other hand, Dionysus, the divine representative of the matriarchal earth cults of Asia Minor, was the patron of an instrument that was inherently masculine. In this context it is equally hard to explain the

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<sup>103</sup>Sachs, The Wellsprings of Music, p. 94.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-96.

intentions of ancient sculptors, who frequently represented the figures of both Apollo and Dionysus in forms which are unmistakably effeminate.

The dualistic nature of Greek music can be appreciated by comparing it with the fine arts. In contrast to the architecture and sculpture of the classical age, which were for the most part autochthonous, Greek music was largely imported. It has never been ascertained, for example, that any instrument ever originated in Greece; moreover, the primitive state in which the kithara and aulos remained until the latter part of the fifth century seems anomalous to the classical refinement of the Greek temple. Indeed, it almost seems as if an unconscious attempt was made to sustain the incongruities between music and the plastic arts. Sachs admits such a possibility when he says,

Though Greece was geographically a part of Europe, its music was largely Asiatic. The Greeks themselves admitted, indeed emphasized, this fact. They credited Egypt, Assyria, Asia Minor, and Phoenicia with the invention of the instruments they used, named two of their main tonalities after the Asiatic countries Phrygia and Lydia, referred to Egypt as the source of their musicopedagogic ideas, and attributed the creation of Greek music to Olympos, the son of Marsyas the Phrygian.<sup>105</sup>

It may well be that in the music of Asia Minor the Greeks discerned an element of mysticism that was lacking in the severe choral tradition of the Doric mainland. This quality would have found a welcome counterpart in the dithyramb, the dance-song which had achieved an impressive degree of artistic development in Corinth as early as the seventh century B. C. and was already highly ecstatic in nature. Mystical elements were thus added to the self-inducing, hypnotic aspects of rhythm via the melodies of the Near East. The resulting product, as far as the music of the fifth century was concerned, was an agreeable blending

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<sup>105</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 197.



of the rational quantities of form and structure with the irrational qualities of mood and transcendence. This mixture apparently did not disappear with the passing of the classical age. On the contrary, Blom sees it as a constituent characteristic of neo-Hellenic folk music. Such music, he maintains, if it is viewed comprehensively,

may be said to contain, on the one hand, fundamental elements of the ancient Greek art (modes and tonal systems) and, on the other, well-pronounced features of the chromatic oriental music. . . . These elements are rather freely intermixed and, therefore, are to be found everywhere; but generally speaking the diatonic (modal) element prevails over the chromatic.

Out of 1,108 folksongs and dances from every part of Greece, both continental and insular, as they appear in the principal collections, we find 691 in the ancient (diatonic) modes, i.e. 62 per cent. of the whole are exclusively modal; 91 are purely chromatic (8 per cent.), while 142 (13 per cent.) contain both elements, the diatonic and the chromatic. The remaining 184 (17 per cent.) are in the two modern modes, mostly in the major which is related to the ancient Lydian mode. It may thus be said that about 60 per cent. of the Greek folksongs are modal, about 20 per cent. chromatic (either exclusively or with a chromatic influence) and 20 per cent. "western European," in the sense of being in the two modern modes.<sup>106</sup>

The success with which the rational and intuitive aspects of music were combined may well have been the stimulus that tempted Attic musicians to experiment with the structure of the enharmonic genus, a category which they regarded as typically Hellenic, although it has since been shown that it, too, originated in the Orient. Prior to the fifth century, at any rate, aulos players never permitted themselves to divide the semitone of the enharmonic scale; however, in the latter part of the fifth century, quarter-tones were employed not only by auletes but by lyre-players. Moreover, the experimentation with variable intervals did not confine itself to the enharmonic genus alone. It extended to the diatonic (which could be formed according to either of two distributions

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<sup>106</sup>Grove's Dictionary, p. 269.



of musical steps:  $1-1-1/2$  or  $1\ 1/4-3/4-1/2$ ) and to the chromatic (which had three variants, schematically designated as follows:  $1\ 1/2-1/2-1/2$ ,  $1\ 5/6-1/3-1/3$ , or  $1\ 3/4-3/8-3/8$ ).<sup>107</sup> These microtonic intervals, known by the rhetorical term chroai, or "colors," were abandoned in Hellenistic times. During the period of their popularity, they nonetheless exhibited the duality under consideration here. For example, while they could be reproduced both by instruments and the human voice, they could not be identified by the intellect. "Our contemporaries," lamented Plutarch, in the second century A. D., "have thoroughly neglected the finest genus, to which the ancients devoted all their eagerness. Most of them have lost the discernment of enharmonic intervals."<sup>108</sup>

Finally, if the presence of folk rituals in a nation's culture can be interpreted as a sign that the sophistication of reason has failed to obliterate the significance of fundamental beliefs and mores, then it is evident that the music which was so much a part of Athenian life evidenced a dualism in the realm of myth and ritual. This dualism explains, in part, the binary character that music took in other areas. An example cited by Wellescz will suffice to illustrate this duality. In the Frogs Dionysus accuses Aeschylus of usurping folk melodies as a source of musical themes, by asking him, "Did you get those water-drawer's ditties from Marathon, or where?" To this question Aeschylus replies that folk music was sacred to the Muses and that he would not reap from the same "holy meadow" that Phrynichus had used. But the truth of the matter, Wellescz believes, is that

Aeschylus did, in fact, draw upon the same rustic hymnal. Its influence appears in the rhythmical refrains used at the end of strophic

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<sup>107</sup>Harvard Dictionary, p. 143.

<sup>108</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 207.

movements in some of his choruses. [Agamemnon 381-85.] Echoes of a more primitive music are audible too. In a chorus of Persian elders bewailing the destruction of Xerxes' army, his mind goes back to the dirge-cry for Bormus sung by serfs as they reaped the corn-fields by the Black Sea; at the end of two choric strophae of the Agamemnon he recalls the "Ailinn" of the Linus-song sung by peasants since Homeric times. [Agamemnon 121; Persae 935-40.] Aristophanes himself, at the end of a play, will often use the old wedding-cry "Hymenaeus," or the "tenella kallinike" of Archilochus, or some country dance. Popular melody was still an ingredient in the subtle and modern music of Euripides, though he drew it (so Aristophanes alleges) not from pure and solemn rural chants, but from the dregs of vulgar song--dirges, drinking-catches, dances fit for castanets: in fact, the harmonies of low life which Plato rejected.<sup>109</sup>

In the light of the evidence presented in the preceding pages, it is evident that the various aspects of Greek music exhibit a duality which has never been adequately acknowledged. It is not surprising that, with perhaps the single exception of educational music, this duality pervaded the whole of Greek music. After all, music, as Sachs observes, has "little to do with the mutable surface of life, and nothing with the struggle for existence. This is why music is one of the steadiest elements in the evolution of mankind. It is so steady that races of a relatively high cultural level . . . hold onto musical styles of an astonishingly archaic character; indeed, of the most primitive character we know."<sup>110</sup>

The dualism which has been cited as a distinguishing characteristic of Greek music is important not only as a means of correcting the one-sided aspect of traditional scholarship but also as a positive aid toward a fuller understanding of the aesthetic which influenced the development of Greek theatrical forms. That there is a close relationship between the structure of music and the physical conventions of the theatre can best be demonstrated by an analysis of the spatial concepts which

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<sup>109</sup> New Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 392.

<sup>110</sup> Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 21.

were reflected in musical theory. This task will be undertaken in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6

### MUSICAL SPACE

Margarete Bieber's discussion of the classical Greek theatre stresses the fact that the theatron, or auditorium, was oriented about the circular orchestra, or dancing-floor. In the course of her analysis, she refers to Dörpfeld's reconstruction of the fifth century skene and orchestra in order to demonstrate a nuclear arrangement in which the thymele and altar were located precisely at the center of the orchestra. Furthermore, she establishes an integral relationship between the centrality of the orchestra and the activity of actors and chorus when she says,

One thing is absolutely sure: players and chorus appeared through the whole of the classical period, at one and the same place, that is, in the orchestral area. Almost all extant dramas and all the comedies contain scenes in which the players and the chorus act together, sometimes even mingling freely, coming to close quarters, or returning together.<sup>111</sup>

In other words, the activity of Attic drama centered primarily in the orchestra and revolved, in all probability, about the focal point of the altar.

This nuclear-oriented activity in the drama is paralleled to an astonishing degree by the theoretical structure of early Greek music. More than in any other way, the parallel exists in the terms which were used to designate the respective pitches in the diatonic scale, e.g. nete (highest), mese (middle), and hypate (lowest). Thus, the very nature of this scale system suggests an attempt to organize music in terms

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<sup>111</sup>Margarete Bieber, The History of the Greek and Roman Theater, p. 58.



of a theory of proportions in which pitches were discriminated according to their nearness to or distance from a predominating note, mese. Eventually, an eight-tone scale was produced in which the various degrees were given the following names: nete, paranete, trite, paramese, mese, lichanos, parhypate, and hypate. The fact that mese was regarded as the fundamental note by which all others were determined appears indisputable when one remembers that it served not only as the center of the Dorian mode but of all the Greater Perfect System (Supra., p. 5). Sachs says of this system,

It was perfect as a unique attempt to organize the musical space from one center, a. The center stands in its original octave of Dorian structure, e<sup>1</sup>-e, which by adding half an octave above and half an octave below, is extended to two octaves a<sup>1</sup>-A. This new unit could be shifted both up and down by half an octave either way and thus cover three octaves.<sup>112</sup>

Of course, it must be admitted that the Greater Perfect System did not attain its final form until the fourth century B. C. Nevertheless, the process of systematizing was well under way in the fifth century, and the centrality of mese had been established long before that.

The centripetal force which mese exerted was reflected in the structure of the pentads and heptads which were the forerunners of the enharmonic and diatonic genera. It is known, for example, that the original enharmonion was pentatonic, its tetrachords consisting of a major third with an undivided semitone immediately below (e.g. d<sup>1</sup>-b<sup>b</sup>-a, a-f-e). Likewise, the earliest notes to be identified in the diatonon formed the pentatonic sequence d<sup>1</sup>-b-a, a-g-e, which led ultimately to the Dorian heptad d<sup>1</sup>-c<sup>1</sup>-b-a, a-g-f-e. All of these sequences illustrate the tendency, prior to the fifth century, of Greek musicians to conceive of melodic

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<sup>112</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 222.

structure in terms of a central, orienting point, mese. The same predisposition toward a center of concentration is evident in the way in which stringed instruments were tuned. Instrumentalists, Sachs believes, always began their tuning from a middle string, a (mese), and from there made their way to the outer strings by a series of minor thirds. The consequences of such a practice were indeed unique. "Musical space, vague and shapeless in our music, became a palpable reality in Greece. Each key had its own center, to be sure; but also musical space as a whole had its immovable center which, being the pitch tone, was never neglected."<sup>113</sup>

At the same time, the reluctance with which new strings were periodically added to the lyre and kithara suggests that the "number of strings on an instrument may not always have been determined for specifically musical reasons."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Sachs refers to a Babylonian vase depicting two harps with five and seven strings respectively as evidence that the ancients had an almost supernatural awe of certain numbers which were believed to contain cosmological significance. To illustrate, "five" was regarded as efficacious in alleviating suffering, and this belief may have indirectly contributed to the perpetuation of the archaic pentad in music long after the enharmonic genus, with its quarter-tones, had come into use. The sanctity of this number may also have been impressed upon the public consciousness by the fact that the enharmonic pentad was especially favored by players of the aulos, the instrument traditionally associated with healing.<sup>115</sup>

Whatever the reason may have been for the number of strings on a particular instrument, the central authority of the middle string was

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>114</sup>Reese, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

unquestionable. Such an emphasis undoubtedly was supported by the philosophic thought of the sixth century B. C. The cosmology of Anaximander, for example, taught that all things in heaven and on earth had their origin in a fertile nucleus located at the center of many concentric circles. Likewise, the Pythagorean concept of the universe held that it was a wheel or ring which exhibited the cosmic virtues of order, proportion, and beauty. In the fifth century B. C., as the consequence of two sequential forces, love and strife, Empedocles viewed the world cyclically. Love was identified in terms of the compositional attributes of mass, and strife distributed that mass in separate, concentric layers. The whole process was believed to be spherical in nature, with earth at the center and fire at the circumference.<sup>116</sup>

It is also quite likely that the Greek insistence on an absolute, fixed center of musical space stemmed from the religious orientation of classical art forms. Mircea Eliade contends that the establishing of a point of reference is "a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world." It necessitates a break in the "homogeneity of space" by means of a hierophany which reveals an absolute reality--a sacred space--that is opposed to the nonreality of the surrounding space. Thus, Eliade says, "the religious experience of the nonhomogeneity of space is a primordial experience," equivalent to an ontological founding of the world.

In the homogeneous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>W. C. K. Guthrie, The Greek Philosophers from Thales to Aristotle, pp. 27, 37, 52.

<sup>117</sup>Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 20, 21.

The principal symbols by which the sacred center was made manifest were the circle and the wheel. Their intimate relation to human destiny can be inferred from the oracular wheels of prophecy which decorated the temple of Apollo at Delphi, from the currency of such idioms as "the wheel of existence" and "the navel of the world," and from the prominence which was given to circular forms in classical art and architecture.

In view of the prestige which was attached to the concept of centrality in music, philosophy, and religious ritual, it is natural to suppose that the image would also have found expression in the theatre. Such a supposition, strengthened by the analogies which have been cited, lends weight to Bieber's thesis concerning the central position of the altar within the orchestral circle. In addition, it suggests that the altar performed a function--at least, in those plays which emphasized the role of the chorus--comparable to that of mese. It provided a unique point of orientation for the action of the drama by reminding the spectators that, after all else had been considered, the basic core of the drama was the reenactment of the Dionysian cycle of birth, death, and regeneration. In the early days of the drama, this ritual purpose was clearly evident in the dithyrambic choir of perhaps fifty men and boys who danced in a circle about a central figure (the aulos-player) and sang of the god's passion in melodies which, since their main tonalities were close to the thetic center a--right in the middle of musical space--were "mesoid."<sup>118</sup> Moreover, it is more than probable that the circumference of the orchestral circle was regarded by the theatre audience as an enclosure of sacred space, a space made sacred by virtue of the altar which stood at its

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<sup>118</sup> Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 267.



center and by the consecration to the god of the rites which were performed within that circle.

As already mentioned, the concept of mese implied a fixed, immutable center, a stationary force at the middle of musical space. But it has also been demonstrated that Greek music was dualistic in nature, and it is to this dualism that Sachs refers when he says, "a note can be mese by thesis, and lichanos by dynamis."<sup>119</sup> The discussion thus far has dealt with mese as a thetic concept; mese must now be considered as a dynamic concept, one that involves a relative, functional position in musical space. In order to appreciate this function, one must examine the relationships which the various modal scales bear to one another. These relationships can best be illustrated by the following sequence:

Dorian	e f g (a) b c d
Hypodorian	a b c (d) e f g
Phrygian	d e f (g) a b c
Hypophrygian	g a b (c) d e f
Lydian	c d e (f) g a b
Hypolydian	f g a (b) c d e
Mixolydian	b c d (e) f g a

The series above is based on the order in which the various modes would be formed when their respective tetrachords are placed in conjunct position. Although the same principle of progression would apply to disjunctive arrangement, the mobility of mese would not be as readily apparent as it is in this series of conjunctive heptads. Here the dynamic function of mese is at once evident in the way in which the mese of one mode becomes the tonic of the successive mode; thus, a cyclical movement is established in which mese progresses at the interval of a fourth until it resumes its thetic position within the Dorian mode. In expressing the

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<sup>119</sup> Sachs, Our Musical Heritage, p. 32.

principle involved, one may paraphrase Sachs's statement by saying, "a note can be mese by thesis, and hypate by dynamis." With this cyclical evolution in mind, one can fully appreciate the weight of Sachs's observation (which was only partially quoted on page 61),

Musical space, vague and shapeless in our music, became a palpable reality in Greece. Each key had its own center, to be sure; but also musical space as a whole had its immovable center which, being the pitch tone, was never neglected. As a result, every melody had two foci [*italics mine*]; every note or group of notes gravitated toward two different centers at once, toward the center of the individual key and toward the center of the immovable perfect system. The first bearing was called dynamis or "mobile force," and the second, thesis or "stationary force." A note changed its dynamis according to the key; its thesis was immovable. . . . The mobile and the stationary functions coincided only in Dorian.<sup>120</sup>

While the modes were therefore centrally oriented, that orientation was paradoxical in essence, gravitating at one and the same time toward the dynamic and thetic centers. Moreover, this paradox was peculiar to the classical age, for the concept of dynamis was unrecognized in preclassical times, and thesis disintegrated in the Hellenistic period.<sup>121</sup>

The fact that the Greeks conceived of musical space in cyclical form may be further demonstrated by the internal structure of the tetrachords in each mode and by the relationships which these tetrachords bear to one another. One can best indicate the nature of these structural relationships by showing in sequence the sizes of the intervals separating the tones of each tetrachord. The same conjunctive series, then, distributes the intervals (in terms of "steps") in the following patterns:

Dorian	1/2-1-1, 1-1/2-1
Hypodorian	1-1/2-1, 1-1/2-1
Phrygian	1-1/2-1, 1-1-1/2
Hypophrygian	1-1-1/2, 1-1-1/2
Lydian	1-1-1/2, 1-1-1

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<sup>120</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 234.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

Hypolydian	1-1-1, 1/2-1-1
Mixolydian	1/2-1-1, 1/2-1-1
Dorian	1/2-1-1, Etc.

Before one can appreciate the cyclical progression inherent in this schema, he must take note of certain considerations. (1) The second tetrachord of the primary modes--Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian--establishes a pattern which is immediately repeated in both tetrachords of the secondary modes following them. (2) This repetition occurs in every case, with one exception--the Hypolydian. (3) The Hypolydian, instead of retaining the form of its first tetrachord, assumes a primary function by initiating a new pattern in its second tetrachord. (4) The new pattern is then dutifully assumed by both tetrachords of the ensuing Mixolydian, and in this way the cyclical process is both terminated and begun again. The deviation in the Hypolydian mode may perhaps be explained by the fact that the dynamic interval from hypate (f) to mese (b) is not the perfect fourth which is found in the first tetrachord of every other mode in the series; it is an augmented fourth. Consequently, if the augmented fourth were to be retained as the pattern for the Mixolydian, the resulting process would be circular in form rather than cyclical. The fact that such a result did not occur suggests that the aberration in the Hypolydian mode is a contrived departure recognized as necessary for the perpetuation of the cyclical arrangement of musical space.

The foregoing analyses of the concept of mese have identified the Greek modes in terms of an orientation which was essentially nuclear and a movement which was primarily cyclical. In assuming and maintaining such forms, classical music established norms which Aristoxenus later upheld as being the foremost ingredients of melody; that is, aids were provided whereby one could follow the "process of a melody" with both the

ear and the intellect. In such a process, Aristoxenus said, "the ear detects the magnitudes of the intervals as they follow one another, and the intellect contemplates the functions of the notes in the system to which they belong."<sup>122</sup> Perhaps it was his awareness of the dualistic nature and cyclical form of the ancient melodies that led him to an observation about music that applies just as appropriately to the nature of the Greek theatre. The perception of music, he claimed, "implies the simultaneous cognition of a permanent and of a changeable element, and . . . this applies without limitation or qualification to every branch of music."<sup>123</sup>

By transferring the concepts of thesis and dynamis to the theatre, one is equally impressed by a similar element of permanence and change. The thetic element in Greek tragedy is, as previously stated, the reenactment of the Dionysian myth. It was for this purpose that the Athenian citizens flocked to the City Dionysia. It was to remind the people of the sacramental nature of the celebration that the altar stood in the center of the orchestra. Yet, one must concede that, with the introduction of the individual actor, the element of thesis began to recede in favor of a more dynamic center of emphasis. The action of the drama, accordingly, suffered a shift in focus so that, rather than centering on the passion of the god per se, it concentrated on the functional figure of the tragic hero and on the cycle which was inherent in the stories of Oedipus, Agamemnon, Medea, and so forth. In a sense, then, one might say that, with the appearance of each successive tragic figure, the dramatic imitation was providing itself with a new, dynamic mese which

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<sup>122</sup>Aristoxenus, Cf. Macran's notes, p. 269.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-90.



accelerated the cyclical action of the particular myth. Nevertheless, there was always an ~~immutable~~ undercurrent of thesis in the symbolic activities of the chorus, who again and again brought the Athenian audience back to the ritualistic core of the dramatic event.

## PART II. RHYTHM AND DANCE

### Chapter 7

#### RHYTHM AND METER

Our modern divergence from the Greek attitude toward life and art is nowhere more evident than in our understanding of the nature of music. To the Greek of the fifth century before Christ, the term mousikē included in its scope melody, rhythm, dance, and poetry, and only he who was highly skilled in each of these areas was fit to be called a "musical man" (aner mousikēs). While our conception of music freely admits such principal categories as melody, harmony, and rhythm, it relegates to secondary or subsidiary levels the arts of dance and poetry. Dance, it is grudgingly conceded, has certain affinities to musical form, and, perhaps for this reason, it is possible for the layman to include dance within his concept of music. Poetry, however, is by no means allowed such a concession. Instead, it is regarded as an exclusively literary art, and its association with music is at best only an incidental one. Consequently, even though we speak of the lyric qualities of certain types of poetry, the criteria by which we attempt to adjudge that lyricism are exclusively literary in nature, with one exception--meter.

If we are to try to assess the relationship of Greek music to the aesthetic of the classical theatre, we must, for the sake of objectivity, conduct our examination from the modern point of view and include in our discussion only those elements of poetry which are definitely allied with musical form. Meter, although associated with the sound and

sense of words, is at the same time intimately related to the regularly recurring impulses of rhythm and is thus a legitimate topic of investigation.

Citing a relationship between rhythm and meter, however, is not the same thing as saying that the two are identical; nor is it an assertion that the former proceeds from the latter. Indeed, if Aristotle is to be taken at his word, it would seem that just the opposite is the case, for in the Poetics he says, "it is natural for us to take pleasure in mimetic representation as well as in harmony and rhythm; for metres are clearly species of rhythms."<sup>124</sup> On the basis of this passage, then, Aristotle evidently felt that meter was subservient to rhythm. His view lends weight to the argument presented in Chapter 3 ("The Literary Bias"), which holds that Greek music was not exclusively oriented to the spoken text either for its melodic line or its rhythmic foundation. Dale, in her discussion of Greek lyric meters, has also pointed out that in dramatic lyrics the phrase units were often determined by a rhythm which operated independently of meter.<sup>125</sup>

In order to understand how it was possible for the separate entities of rhythm and meter to be integrated into an artistic whole, one has merely to examine a fragment of Greek music dating from the early Graeco-Roman period, namely, the "Skolion" of Seikilos. (Cf. Fig. 3, p. 38, supra.) Throughout this fragment Sachs has discerned the use of rhythmical symbols. Such a practice is a declaration in effect that the melody of the song is independent of the meter of the poem. In other

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<sup>124</sup>Aristotle, The Poetics 1448<sup>b</sup>.20-22; in Warry, pp. 100-101.

<sup>125</sup>Dale, p. 13.

words, a metrically irregular text has been adapted to a symmetrical, possibly preexistent melody with the result that the "time" of the piece can best be expressed not by the invariable regularity of the metronome but by a rhythmically flexible unit known as "three" time. According to Sachs, the asymmetrical combination of meter with time, indicated by the composer by the addition of certain signs (i.e. — equalled two units of time, ㄣ represented three units, ㄥ four, and ㄤ five), suggests that the poetic meters were being ignored. Had they been observed, there would have been no need of signs denoting length.<sup>126</sup>

Another indication of the independence of rhythm from meter is, as Sachs so carefully demonstrates, the use of geometric signs for musical rests. In his opinion, the importance of signs indicating rests cannot be overestimated, for

there were no rests in poetry or verse-ruled melody. A verse might have a caesura; but it was a mere breath to emphasize the incision. A relaxing silence might separate the verses; but the disconnection was irrational and not counted in: meter ran from the first to the last syllable of a verse; the following vacuum was ametric, indeed, antimetric. A musical rest, on the contrary, was rational and counted in as a part of the measure; though inaudible, it was felt to obey a beat and to hold the listener's attention.<sup>127</sup>

Unfortunately, the distinction between rhythm and meter was not preserved by the Alexandrian theoreticians, those who felt called upon to continue the classical tradition. These men were unfamiliar with the poet-musician of antiquity; they themselves were neither musicians nor poets but grammarians. Strictly metricistic in orientation and exclusively concerned with philology and speech enunciation, they cared little about the principles by which poetry had been bound to music and the dance; instead, they gave their primary attention to such matters as "the

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<sup>126</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 264.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 265.



measuring of syllables."<sup>128</sup> The result of their efforts is the mistaken notion, deriving from the late Hellenistic period, that the melodies of ancient Greece were dominated by the pitch accent of speech, and that rhythm was determined by the meters of poetry. The logical consequence of such an emphasis was, of course, a deliberate imitation on the part of composers living around the time of the Second Sophistic (ca. 100 B. C. to 200 A. D.) of what they believed to be archaic styles of melody and rhythm. The "Hymn to the Sun" of Mesomedes, dating from the second century A. D., is an excellent example of such imitation.

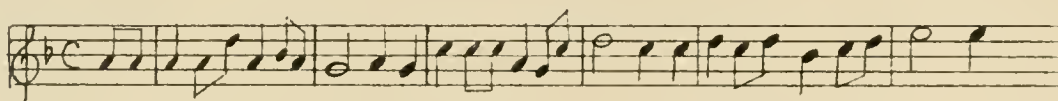


Fig. 4. - The Hymn to the Sun by Mesomedes<sup>129</sup>

One is at once struck by the extremely metrical rhythm of this fragment. It is almost entirely anapaestic throughout and shows a marked accommodation of not only rhythm but even of melody to meter. Of the two fragments in question, it is significant that the "Skolion," the one nearest in time to classical Greece, is the one in which there is the most evident divergence between the rhythm of the melody and the meters of the verse. Such evidence may lend support to Plutarch's claim that the rhythms of Hellenic music formed a complex patchwork which eventually gave way to conventional patterns in deference to melodic experimentation. Plutarch even designated the older composers as "rhythmophiles" while he

<sup>128</sup>Lang, p. 9; Cf. Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, p. 145.

<sup>129</sup>Reproduced from Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, p. 139.

referred to the later ones as "melophiles."<sup>130</sup>

While these two examples illustrate certain aspects of rhythm--the "Skolion" expressing the numerical and the "Hymn to the Sun" the purely metrical--they also suggest two distinct categories of rhythm which were certainly known to ancient Greece and must therefore be accounted for. These may be respectively identified as "additive" and "binary" rhythms.

The terms "additive" and "binary" are employed by musicologists as tools of analysis. With respect to rhythm, they apply more to units of time than to metrical beats, although they are also concerned with the distribution of metrical patterns. The terminology used by both ancients and moderns is often ambiguous and misleading, and one frequently is exasperated at the use of poetic terms to convey musico-rhythmic concepts. Sachs feels, however, that such confusion is inevitable, for

both poetry and music offer a contradictory rhythmical picture. As essential parts of orchestrics, they were inseparably connected with the stride of man; but as basically metrical structures, they were "breathing" rather than "striding." As a consequence, one half of the meters were divisive and binary, and the other half, additive and measured by an odd number of beats.<sup>131</sup>

The units of time by which rhythms were classified were determined according to the quantitative principle; i.e. they were identified in both poetry and music as long syllables or notes among short ones rather than as strong beats among weaker ones, although it has never been convincingly demonstrated that stress was unimportant in Greek music. The basic unit on which the quantitative principle rested was the "brevis" or short note. For the Greeks it represented a chronos protos, a "first time" or

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<sup>130</sup>Sachs, The Wellsprings of Music, p. 120.

<sup>131</sup>Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, pp. 142-43.

elemental musical atom "which could not be divided by either a syllable or a note or a gesture."<sup>132</sup> In this qualification we can see once more that the rhythm of poetry was closely bound up with that of the dance and mime. The long syllable or note was later given the name "longa," and even though it was theoretically equivalent to two "breves," in practice it was often given a time value of from two to four times the length of the chronos protos, depending on its use in prosody, marching, or the dance.<sup>133</sup>

From the manner in which the "longae" and "breves" combined, it is possible to ascertain both the various metrical systems of poetry and the rhythmical patterns of music. Aristoxenus tells us that such combinations were effected by means of ratios between the accented and unaccented parts of a rhythmic foot or by "an irrational relation such as lies midway between two ratios familiar to sense."<sup>134</sup> By "irrational" he presumably had in mind a time-length which, although it was capable of being produced mathematically, could not be introduced into rhythmical composition. Sachs agrees with Aristoxenus in regard to the division of each foot into two equal or unequal phases and notes that feet could be classified in one of four groups. The ratios represented by these groups were as follows: 1:1 (isa or "equals"), 2:1 (diplasia or "doubles"), 3:2 (hemiolia or "increased by one and a half"), and 4:3 (epitrita or "increased by four-thirds"). These rhythmic ratios make it clear, Sachs believes, that the Greeks found an essential correspondence between rhythm and melody, for the ratios just given coincide exactly with the

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<sup>132</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 260.

<sup>133</sup>Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, pp. 119-20.

<sup>134</sup>Aristoxenus, Elements of Rhythm, p. 413; cited by Macran in Aristoxenus, p. 239.

harmonic ratios of the unison, octave, fifth, and fourth.<sup>135</sup>

Even though it has not been universally accepted, it is quite likely that Sachs's categorizing of both poetic meters and their rhythmic equivalents is the most reliable system presently available to scholars.<sup>136</sup> The following arrangement is an attempt to classify the system generically, according to the binary or additive nature of its respective groups.

### I. Binary Rhythms

A. Isa ("equals" or dactylic feet)		Time
1. Prokeleusmatikos or Pyrrhichios		2/8
2. Prokeleusmatikos (doubled)		4/8
3. Anapaistos (the modern dactyl)		2/4
4. Anapaistos		2/4
5. Spondeios		2/4
6. Spondeios (doubled)		2/2
B. Diplasia ("doubles" or iambic feet)		
1. Iambos		3/8
2. Trochaïos		3/8
3. Orthios		3/2
4. Trochaïos Semantos		3/2

### II. Additive Rhythms

A. Hemiolia (paeonic feet or five-beat measures)		
1. Paion diagyros ("bent paion")		5/8
2. Paion epibatos ("climbing paion")		5/4
B. Epitrita (seven-beat measures)		

These rhythms, in which one part of the measure stood to the other as four-to-three or three-to-four, were relinquished not long after Aristoxenus' death.<sup>137</sup>

A word of explanation must be given to account for the listing of diplasia under the binary heading. Since their ratios are indicated by 1:2 in the case of the iamb and 2:1 in that of the trochee, these meters would seem to correspond to modern, three-beat measure and would ordinarily be considered additive. Further investigation, however, discloses that, perhaps

<sup>135</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 260.

<sup>136</sup>Cf. Dale, p. 47, for exceptions to Sachs's categories.

<sup>137</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, pp. 260-61.



because they were so frequently used in marching and dance rhythms, later iambs, trochees, and anapaests existed only in pairs and not as individual feet. Indeed, Horace said, "the long syllable preceded by a short is called an iambus--a rapidly moving foot: its swiftness fixed the name of iambic trimeter upon verse which has six beats and is without variation first or last."<sup>138</sup> Moreover, Dale, who probably would be reluctant to concede that iambics and trochaics are essentially binary in character, admits that both lend themselves to vigorous dancing and that in the lyrics of comedy "the overwhelming majority of cola are [trochaic] dimeters or compounds of dimeters."<sup>139</sup>

While little information has come down to us concerning the ancient epitrita, their use in neo-Hellenic folk music is most conspicuous. Blom has gone so far as to say, in fact, that "seven-part ( $7/8$ ,  $7/4$ ) time is the Greek national time par excellence." He further alleges that the average Greek feels as comfortable in this rhythm as the ordinary western European does in  $2/4$  time. In folk song and dance, he points out, the measure is usually subdivided into  $3 + 2 + 2$  beats, with metrical accents occurring on the first and fourth beats; but a contrary arrangement is also possible.<sup>140</sup> Such evidence is often dismissed because of the gap which exists at the present time between art music on the one hand and folk music on the other. Such a breach was unknown in ancient Greece, and it is therefore quite possible that neo-Hellenic folk music preserves many of the features which were characteristic of classical Greece.

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<sup>138</sup>The Great Critics, Eds. J. H. Smith and E. W. Parks, p. 121.

<sup>139</sup>Dale, p. 86.

<sup>140</sup>Grove's Dictionary, p. 274.

The four categories, isa, diplasia, hemiolia, and epitrita, were fundamental to rhythm and meter. They provided the framework within which rhythmic patterns could be formulated, and composers did not go beyond their limits. An explanation by Sachs will suffice to show both the limitations and the possibilities of such a system.

A series of ten beats, the Greeks said, could not be rhythmically divided into one plus nine, or two plus eight, or three plus seven beats. Four plus six, on the contrary, would be admissible as hemiolia in the ratio 2:3, and also five plus five, as isa in the ratio 1:1. Three plus seven beats were acceptable by cleaving the seven into three and four, so that the ten beats could be organized into three plus three plus four in all permutations. Not only permutation was conceded; two or more beats could be drawn together in order to form longer notes.<sup>141</sup>

Besides dividing rhythmic feet into two equal or unequal phases, Aristoxenus added another important qualification, namely, that the lengths of the feet should vary in response to the general rate of movement. This variance should occur, he maintained, without any alteration in the characteristic proportion by which each type of rhythm was recognized.

And while the magnitudes are constant, the quality of the feet undergoes a change; and the same magnitude serves as a foot, and as a combination of feet. . . . And in general, while rhythmical composition employs a rich variety of movements, the movements of the feet by which we note the rhythms are always simple and the same.<sup>142</sup>

Thus, if a crotchet or quarter note is used as the fundamental time unit, a dactylic foot might be rendered in several different ways: as  $\overset{\frown}{\text{c}} \overset{\frown}{\text{q}} \overset{\frown}{\text{q}}$ , as  $\text{c} \cdot \overset{\frown}{\text{q}} \overset{\frown}{\text{q}}$ , or as  $\overset{\frown}{\text{c}} \overset{\frown}{\text{q}} \overset{\frown}{\text{q}}$ . In these three examples the dactylic character is retained in the isometric ratio of the first phase to the second. The lengths of the feet, on the other hand, vary because of a difference

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<sup>141</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, pp. 263-64.

<sup>142</sup>Aristoxenus, p. 190.

in the rate of movement from one example to another.<sup>143</sup>

When speaking of the relationship of one part of a rhythmic foot to another, one almost always becomes involved in questions of quantity versus quality or, to use the traditional terms of the controversy over classical rhythms, length versus stress. It is to this subject that the ensuing chapter is devoted.

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., Cf. Macran's notes, p. 260.

## Chapter 8

### LENGTH AND STRESS

The question of whether Greek music knew stress, in the western European understanding of that term, has by no means been settled. Controversy over the matter has been kept alive by those who insist on confusing the quantitative basis of meter with the qualitative nature of rhythm and also by their failure to account for the tremendous impact which the dance has had upon rhythm down through the ages. The issue is further obscured by the argument which holds that occidental ears cannot possibly appreciate, or even hear, purely quantitative rhythms.<sup>144</sup> Apparently, no one has ever raised the question of whether there is such a thing as a "purely quantitative rhythm." In theory, such a phenomenon would in all likelihood be construed to be a measure of time which is based solely on the length and quantity of syllables or sounds. But if such a theory were valid, then there could be no distinction between meter and rhythm, and the rhythm of any piece could be determined exclusively in terms of a metronomic distribution of counts. The belief that such a determination is possible is reflected in the statement by at least one author that "no real distinction can be drawn between the rhythms of Greek music and the metres of Greek poetry."<sup>145</sup>

Evidently, however, the hypothesis of a purely quantitative rhythm is not maintained without some reservations, for Dale, one of its

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<sup>144</sup>Dale, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup>Grove's Dictionary, p. 771.



foremost advocates, admits at the same time that there is a "duality inherent in all rhythm--motion and rest, sound and stillness, up and down, left, right, loud and soft, quick and slow," and that even within a metrical foot "there must be some kind of alternation or swing to make its rhythm perceptible."<sup>146</sup> Moreover, she grants to spoken verse a "pitch-accent" which was distinguishable from the purely quantitative meter and says that no regular relation between the two is predicable.

Warry holds a view of rhythm which admits the possibility of qualitative differences and also furthers the idea of an inherent duality. This view he proffers as being close to Aristotle's understanding of the concept. He suggests that when we give our attention to the metaphor which infuses the word rhythmos, "the full range of its meaning becomes apparent."

Rhythm means "flow" and is derived from the verb which means "to flow". . . Shroder considers a fragment of Archilochus in which the human soul is represented as storm-tossed amid the billows of varying fortune. There is here a clear analogy between the rhythm of human life and that of the waves. Yet rhythm is not simply a question of rise and fall but also of current and direction. In Greek, the word sometimes seems to be applied simply to the rise and fall of the waves of the sea, but the truth is that the Greeks regarded the Ocean as a river, and the Bosphorus was similarly regarded. When Greek poets refer to the "flow" of these seas, they are thinking not only of undulation but of current, and the Greek idea of rhythm is one of current combined with alternation, of continuity with vicissitude. (*Italics mine.*)<sup>147</sup>

The idea of current at once implies the presence of some kind of pulsation, and pulsation in turn requires an alternating and recurring pattern of stress and release. This necessity raises a serious question in regard to Blom's observation that although stress was undoubtedly present in the performance of Greek music, it cannot be regarded as necessary, and "still less can it be assumed that stresses were equidistant."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Dale, p. 201.

<sup>147</sup> Warry, pp. 114-15.

<sup>148</sup> Grove's Dictionary, p. 771.

For it is obvious from the context that Blom has failed to discriminate between the constituents of rhythm and those of meter. For a proper understanding, then, of the part which stress may have played in Greek music, we must avoid confusing the metricality of Greek poetry with the rhythmic alternation of the music to which that poetry was often set. It is apparent, of course, that a recurring pattern of strong and weak beats would have been fundamental to instrumental rhythms; Sachs, however, believes that it is rather unlikely that Greek vocal practice was ever able or willing to ignore rhythmic factors in its meters, for, he declares,

Even in poetry the metrical unit was called a verse foot, which like all metaphors must originally have been a reality: the Greek, accustomed to conceive poetry, melody, and the dance in its widest sense as one mousike, cannot have forbidden his body and its time rhythm to interfere with meter.<sup>149</sup>

Because rhythmic considerations may have interfered with exclusively metrical ones (as they certainly did in the later "Skolion"), Sachs applies the theory of rhythmic alternation to the verse foot itself and divides each verse foot into two sections, one of which was given a strong and the other, a weaker weight. His examination of the extant manuscripts has convinced him that, with the possible exception of iambs, the "longa" was stressed wherever it stood in the foot. He further asserts that ancient notation often indicates the need for stress by a single dot (stigma) above the note and, occasionally, a double dot, which may have called for a stronger accent.<sup>150</sup> The respective terms which were attached to the two sections of the verse foot were arsis (for the weaker) and basis (Aristoxenus' term) or thesis (for the stronger). In contemporary terminology these would designate the upbeat and downbeat of the

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<sup>149</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 263.

<sup>150</sup>Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, pp. 128, 132, 141.

conductor's baton. That these terms indicated the presence of more than a merely quantitative difference between the two sections of a poetic foot, and that they often were used to denote stress or accent, is suggested by the references which have come down to us from the Greeks and Romans. One needs to be reminded that they thought of thesis as psophos (noise), krotos (rap) and percussio (from the Latin, "to strike"), and of arsis as ano (up) and eremia (silence).<sup>151</sup> In addition, the diversified instrumentation mentioned by Athenaeus--drums, bull-roarers, cymbals, triangles, pectides, and magades--testifies to a rhythm indisputably concerned with the percussive effects of striking, thrumming, and twanging.<sup>152</sup>

But the most impressive evidence, by far, which clarifies the function of arsis and thesis comes by way of two Greek lexicographers, Pollux and Hesychius, both of whom speak of a wooden sandal called a kroupalon. This sandal, Sachs claims, was thick enough to allow for two boards, with castanets between them, to be hinged at the heel in such a way that a stamping of the foot would bring them together in a sharp, cracking sound. Thus, "the contrast between the noisy down beat or thesis and the noiseless arsis of lifting was so strong . . . that a 'qualitative' discrimination was inevitable."<sup>153</sup> The pseudo-Aristotelian De Mundo speaks perhaps to this point when it says that the chorus leader "gives the signal to begin,"<sup>154</sup> and the Problems observes that it is up to the leader to keep the chorus together.<sup>155</sup> It may have been with such

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<sup>151</sup>Ibid., pp. 128, 141.

<sup>152</sup>Athenaeus, pp. 431-33.

<sup>153</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 263.

<sup>154</sup>De Mundo VI.399<sup>a</sup>.16, Tr. E. S. Forster.

<sup>155</sup>Problemata XIX.919<sup>a</sup>.



precedents before him that Pollux connected the stamping of the kroupalon with the function of the coryphaeus, saying, "and he struck the wooden sandal which produced the keynote of the chorus."<sup>156</sup> The theory, at any rate, is upheld by Egon Wellesz, who believes that such a relationship can be dated as far back as the Homeric period when strolling bards performed the role later assumed by the coryphaeus. In that early age, he writes, when speech may have indicated the intonation for song,

the beat of the dancing foot (sometimes marked by castanets) expressed the rhythm. The bard advances into a dancing-ground (chorus or orchestra) and the youths dance time to his song. If a dance is performed without song . . . there is no music either: the rhythm is conducted by the hand-claps of the spectators.<sup>157</sup>

Pickard-Cambridge, on the other hand, is loath to associate the kroupalon with the coryphaeus; he connects it instead with the aulos-player, perhaps as a result of his reluctance to admit that stressed rhythms were essential to Greek choral music, and that if they were indeed present at times, it was more in the nature of an intrusion than by way of planned participation. His very language unintentionally reveals such a reservation when he says,

To lead the singing the first note (endosimon) was given not by an instrument but by the coryphaeus, though it is to be feared that the start was sometimes assisted by the flute-player, not with his instrument only but with a wooden shoe (kroupela) which he wore for the purpose.<sup>158</sup>

At any rate, whether it was the coryphaeus or the aulete who wore the kroupalon, its use in choral music makes it almost certain that the terms arsis and thesis pertained to stress and that accent was known

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<sup>156</sup> Julius Pollux, Onomastikon VII.87; cited in Pickard-Cambridge, p. 267.

<sup>157</sup> New Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, pp. 377-78.

<sup>158</sup> Pickard-Cambridge, p. 267.



to classical Greece.

The problem to be resolved, then, is whether or not, in the face of documentation indicating that stress and accent were known factors in Greek music, it is reasonable to accept the "brevis" as the primary time unit of rhythm. As stated in the preceding chapter, the "brevis" was the chronos protos of the quantitative principle, a principle almost exclusively pertinent to metrical systems. But once it has been established that rhythm demands something in addition to quantity or length, i.e. that it is qualitative as well as durative, then a revaluation of elemental units becomes essential. In this regard, Sachs observes that, above all,

any beat rhythm leads straightway to conceiving the beat itself as the time unit or chronos protos; to uniting two, three, or more of these units in groups of measures; and to subdividing these measures in entire freedom, without sticking to poetic meters, by simply following those ratios that man's ear accepted as rhythmical.<sup>159</sup>

The foregoing chapter listed certain categories of time which were regarded by the Greeks as fundamental to both rhythm and meter, namely, isa, diplasia, hemiolia, and epitrita. It is time now to reconsider those categories, keeping in mind that our interest in them is no longer with metrical ratios but with rhythmic ratios which illustrate definite patterns of arsis and thesis. In each of the feet which have been included in the last three categories, the shorter beat is the arsis or up-beat; in the first category the two short beats of dactyls and anapaests are arses; the first beats of proceleusmatics and spondees, on the contrary, are theses or downbeats. Arsis and thesis, however, by no means applied solely to single feet; they were also involved with complex

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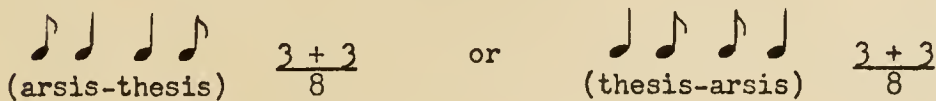
<sup>159</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 263.

combinations of feet known as dipodies, tripodies, and tetrapodies. Using an eighth note as the unit of time, Sachs has provided us with the following examples of such combinations:<sup>160</sup>

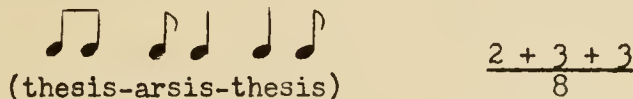
1. Dipody: a two-foot unit of time (in this case, consisting of nine beats, the arsis comprising the first four and the thesis the last five) with the following notation:



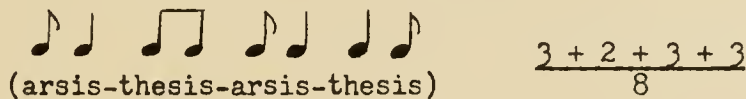
2. Bakchios: a two-foot unit comprised of trochees and iambs:



3. Tripody: a three-foot combination, as, for example, a pyrrhic, an iamb, and a trochee:



4. Tetrapody: a combination of four feet, such as an iamb, a pyrrhic, another iamb, and a trochee:



For a proper understanding of these rhythms, it is essential to realize that arsis and thesis apply only to the entering note. In other words, accent per se is no longer relevant once the note has sounded, regardless of the number of beats which make up the foot. In binary rhythms this principle is unconsciously assumed and taken for granted, and it is not until we enter the realm of additive rhythms that the principle suddenly becomes conspicuous. Indeed, Sachs feels that in the "strict indivisibility of the sounding note we have probably the most

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 261-62.

essential contrast to divisive [binary] rhythms. . . . No beat can interfere with the pattern; no beat can be heard, seen, or even felt while a note is still sounding."<sup>161</sup>

To say, therefore, that fifth century Greece knew accent and stress, and that in choral music the chronos protos must have been the beat rather than the metrical "brevis" is not to allege that the length of the sounding unit had no part to play in rhythm. As a matter of fact, it was the subtle blending of accentual force with additive patterns that made the rhythm of classical Greece distinctively artistic. The truth of this statement emerges at once when one learns that the tripodies and tetrapodies previously illustrated were not regarded as being too complex for ordinary usage or as being specifically intended for professional dancers. Instead, as Sachs demonstrates, they were freely used in "prosodiakoi or marching rhythms for solemn processions, which in our civilization are reduced to poor 4/4 beats--left, right, left, right."<sup>162</sup> The association of complex rhythmic patterns with such a commonplace pastime as marching is an eloquent witness to the richness of classical culture, a culture in which the arts were finely integrated and mousike achieved its highest expression as a fusion of poetic speech, intricate melody, subtle rhythm, and athletic dance movements. Athenaeus reflects a sentiment that had persisted from the classical epoch to the early centuries of the Christian era when he says, "the best varieties of lyric poetry are those which are danced."<sup>163</sup> For Plato had said, perhaps half a millennium before Athenaeus, "he who best blends gymnastics with music and

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<sup>161</sup>Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, p. 131.

<sup>162</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 262.

<sup>163</sup>Athenaeus, pp. 407-408.

applies them most suitably to the soul is the man whom we should most rightly pronounce to be the most perfect and harmonious musician, far rather than the one who brings the strings into unison with one another."<sup>164</sup> The subsequent chapter will study more closely the classical interrelationship between music and the dance.

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<sup>164</sup>Plato, The Republic III.412, Tr. Paul Shorey.



## Chapter 9

### THE DANCE

Of all the arts the dance is perhaps the oldest, for it originated as soon as man gave vent to his emotions by swaying his body and beating his feet. In extant primitive cultures the dance inheres in every aspect of life--birth, death, courtship, marriage, battle, coronation, and worship. In regard to classical Greece, however, modern scholarship is handicapped by a serious lack of explicit records pertaining to sequences of step, movement, and pantomime. Yet, it would appear reasonable to assume that in Greece, as in other countries and cultures, the dance obtained a profusion of forms which were capable of being classified in terms of physical relationship, bodily movement, levels of abstraction, ritualistic function, thematic content, and motif. Scholars must content themselves with mythological derivations of the dance, the literary descriptions of it which are contained in classical and early Christian sources, and remnants of the ancient dance which may still exist in the folk dances of modern Greece. The balance of our attempts to assess the role which the dance played in classical culture must be based on the few inferences which can be drawn from the principles set forth in the previous chapter as being fundamental to Greek rhythms.

As far as the mythological derivations of the dance are concerned, classical Greece reflected the oriental belief that the dance was one of the primordial elements in the creation of life itself.

Hinduism, for example, claimed that the gods who had created the cosmos were themselves created by the dance. Siva, in his dualistic role of destruction and restoration, was often referred to as "Lord of the Dance." (In much the same sense the *Athenaeum* speaks of "Apollo the Dancer," and the *Declamations* of Himerius quote Simonides (ca. sixth century B. C.) as saying, "a dance is ever dear to the Muses, but when they espy Apollo about to lead a round, then more than ever they put forth their best in music and send down Helicon an all-harmonious sound."<sup>165</sup> Indeed, legend held that the cosmos itself moved in a definite rhythm, and to join in the dance was therefore to ally oneself with the "soul of the universe." Damon of Athens, the teacher of Socrates, echoed this credo when he claimed that song and dance resulted from the mortal soul's being in a kind of motion, and that a causal relationship existed between a noble and beautiful soul and a modest and dignified bearing.<sup>166</sup>

Insofar as literary definitions or descriptions of the dance are concerned, they can be discovered in the writings of late antiquity and the early Christian era. These are, for the most part, unsatisfying. About the most that can be hoped for is the mention of certain dances and their assignment to an appropriate category. Granting that this categorizing has been fairly accurate, certain assumptions may be made with respect to the influence which the dance exerted on the music of the fifth century B. C. and, possibly, to the reciprocal effects which music may have had on the dance.

The classification of the various dances which are mentioned in ancient sources has been enormously accelerated by the extensive research

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<sup>165</sup>*Lyra Graeca*, Vol. II, p. 277. <sup>166</sup>*Athenaeus*, pp. 387-88.

of Curt Sachs, in his time probably the world's foremost historian of the dance. His World History of the Dance demonstrates that there are first of all two main categories by which all dances may be identified--the non-harmonic and the enharmonic. Nonharmonic dances are those purely convulsive performances which entail wild paroxysms of the body, loss of individual will, and often a complete lack of consciousness. The experience of the dancer, then, is not one of joy but of suffering. Convulsive dances, Sachs observes, are characteristic of shaman cultures; they occur where magic and religion are under the control of a witch-doctor or medicine man. Religious expression and cult experiences in such an environment are viewed as largely the product of hypnosis. On first acquaintance with this category of dance, one tends to dismiss it as inimical to the spirit of classical Greek culture. There will be cause later, however, to consider the nonharmonic dance in connection with the fifth century theatre. At the other extreme from the convulsive dance is the enharmonic. It, too, involves exhilaration and ecstasy, but, rather than achieving these ends through the mortification of the flesh, enharmonious dances secure them by exalting the flesh, by releasing it from gravity through bodily motions that are forward and upward. Dances "in harmony" with the body are also distinguished from nonharmonious dances by movements which are strongly attached to bodily functions. These movements may in turn be classified as either expanded and open or centralized and close.

Expanded movement is deeply imbedded in vigorous motor reactions; it involves a type of activity which seems almost to defy the law of gravity in its varied leaps and lifts. It also intensifies the rhythmic beat by means of slapping, striding, kicking, skipping, and lunging

which are designed to release excessive energy through a rapid alternation of tension and relaxation, contraction and expansion. Close movement, on the other hand, requires the dancer to maintain a fixed center of motion and a suspended kind of expression that is rigidly confined to a limited range of movement, as, for example, sitting, swaying, swinging, and whirling. Rhythm in close movement is very carefully measured and symmetrical, and while contributing to and facilitating ecstasy, it nevertheless suggests the feminine graces of quietness, stability, and balance.<sup>167</sup>

Enharmonic dances may be classified again according to their respective level of abstraction. This classification seeks to identify each type of dance by its fundamental design or purpose. With this standard in mind, we can designate two distinct extremes in the enharmonic category--the "image" or mimetic and the "imageless" or abstract dances. Between these polar extremes is an ambiguous middle ground which can best be described as "mixed."

Image dances adhere rigidly to natural, pantomimic forms as a means of anticipating an event, dramatizing a desired or necessary end, and thus forcing a compliance with that end. They are found chiefly in patriarchal cultures and employ movements that are extrovert and open, bound to the body, sensory, and given to primarily empirical purposes. Clearly, these were the dances Plutarch must have had in mind when he referred to the dance as "a silent poetry" and to poetry as "a speaking dance," for, he continued,

it would appear that, as if it were a matter of painting, the poems themselves are like the colours, and the dances to which they belong

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<sup>167</sup>Sachs, World History of the Dance, Cf. Chapter 1; henceforth referred to as World History.



like the outlines which the colours fill. And the poet who is thought to have done his best and most expressive work in the Hyporcheme or Dance-Song proves that the two arts (of dancing and poetry) stand in need of one another; compare:

"Come pursue the curving course of the tune,  
and imitate with foot a-whirl in the contest  
unapproachable horse or Amyclean hound."<sup>168</sup>

Athenaeus also tells us that ancient Greek poets composed dance-figures as well as melodies for their poetry, "and they used the dance-figures only to illustrate the theme of the songs . . . hence they termed such performances hyporchemes" (dances which were accompanied by pantomime or were subordinate to song, as indicated by the prefix "hyp--").<sup>169</sup>

Imageless dances differ from mimetic ones in that they are concerned not so much with concrete events and empirical ends as with intellectual abstraction and definite, religious goals. They achieve their purposes without the aid of pantomimic movement or the easily identified forms and gestures of life and nature. Ecstasy is either self-induced or proceeds from the "mystic circle," in which power jumps across from those on the outside of the circle to the one in the center, or vice-versa. Such forms are confined, for the most part, to matriarchal cultures which favor movements that are introvert, free of the body, imaginative, and capable of a high degree of abstraction. It should not be too surprising to learn that imageless dances are most compatible with close, centralized movements and measured, symmetrical rhythms. As a matter of fact, the monotonous regularity of meter and rhythm has a great deal to do with producing ecstasy, for it exerts a subconscious, hypnotic effect upon both the beholder and participant. This very propensity of metrical rhythm led Aristotle to discourage its use in prose

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<sup>168</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. II, p. 331. <sup>169</sup>Athenaeus, pp. 387-88; Cf. Editor's note.

speech by saying, "metre is to be avoided because its irrational potentiality is too great."<sup>170</sup> Again, Plutarch may have been thinking of the irrational and ecstatic elements of both poetry and the dance when he spoke of certain passages which seem to "call down the subject-matter of the dance from heaven above, and to pull and guide one's hand and feet, or rather one's whole body, with the puppet strings of its music, the body being unable to keep still while they are being sung or said."<sup>171</sup>

Mixed dances combine both mimetic and abstract elements and are often performed by both sexes. With few exceptions they take the form of simple choral dances which retain two prominent characteristics: (1) the dancers remain in some sort of linear arrangement, and (2) all movements are originated and led by a dance leader. Some of the most easily identified types of the mixed dance are the Round, the Serpentine, the Choral Front, the Place-Changing Choral, and the Couple Dance. Round dances may consist of one or several concentric circles, with or without a person or object in the center. Serpentine dances are unmistakably imitative in movement but with no apparent, practical end in view, the object of the dance being merely to prolong a continuous winding. Choral Fronts contain special features which are not found in other types, namely, a symmetrical arrangement of the dancers according to size, a distribution of the dancers into several rows in the form of a horse-shoe or semi-circle, the use of brilliant costumes, and uniformity of arm, head, and trunk movements. Place-Changing Choral dances are more complex than simple choral forms, since the dancers are often independent of the dance leader and change places frequently. Couple dances in very early cultures

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<sup>170</sup>Aristotle, The Rhetoric 1408<sup>b</sup>.22; Tr. in Warry, p. 112.

<sup>171</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. II, pp. 331-32.

are performed exclusively by men; the presence of both sexes usually is indicative of a transitional culture. Moreover, dances where the partners touch each other with both hands are late in appearing and are very infrequent.

In attempting to categorize Greek dances specifically according to their degrees of imitation or abstraction, perhaps the wisest policy is to admit that, on the basis of the small amount of information available today, most forms seem to have belonged to the mixed category. Even more difficult is the matter of describing a dance on the sanction of its title, for just as single dances have freely acquired both imitative and abstract elements, so has the subject matter of one dance outgrown its boundaries and intermingled with that of another. Originally, perhaps, dances of hunting, fertility, initiation, courtship, mourning, and battle were predominantly imagistic or imitative. It was not long, however, before most of these themes were found in abstract forms as well. With the blending of types, of course, an amalgamation of thematic content could be expected. Consequently, a single dance such as a weapon dance cannot be relegated to a single motif such as war, for it is also found in connection with marriage ceremonies, fertility rites, and initiatory rituals. Some effort must nevertheless be made to identify the main divisions of Greek dance, if only to derive a partial understanding of why certain dances were incorporated into the drama.

Athenaeus mentions three kinds of dance appropriate to dramatic poetry--the tragic dance called emmeleia, the comic dance known as kordax, and the satyric dance, sikinnis. These, he declares, correspond roughly to three dances found in lyric poetry--the "naked-boy-dance," the hyporchematic, and the pyrriche or war dance. The naked-boy-dance, by his



definition, corresponded to the tragic emmeleia in that both were grave and solemn.

The naked-boy-dance is like what is called the anapale among the ancients. For all the boys who dance it are naked, performing certain rhythmical movements and describing certain positions with the arms gently [i.e. in pantomime and not in an actual pancratium, as the editor notes], so as to represent certain scenes in the wrestling-school during a wrestling-and-boxing match, but moving the feet in time to the music.<sup>172</sup>

This dance was probably a type of the general class of dances known as gymnopaedia. In these, dancers, dedicated to the worship of Apollo, pantomimed the movements of wrestling. Why such a dance, so obviously oriented to athletics, should have been associated with the tragic dance, we can only guess. The answer may lie in the superior agility and skill, the rigorous movements and postures which prevailed in both dance forms. Clues to the answer may also be found, as Athenaeus implies, in two variants of the gymnopaedia which were familiar to him and through which, he felt, the dance could be traced to the worship of Dionysus. The first of these variants, the oschophoric, derives its name from oschos, "a vine-branch laden with grapes."<sup>173</sup> The second, the bacchic, is an overt reference to Dionysus and may possibly refer to the bacchic rhythm which was maintained in the ratio 3:2, or in groups of five beats. If this were the case, then simulating the postures and holds of wrestling while "moving the feet in time to the music" would have required both a high degree of dexterity and an extremely sensitive feeling for uneven, additive rhythmic patterns.

The hyporchematic, Athenaeus observed, was closely related to the comic kordax in that both of them were "full of fun." This dance,

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<sup>172</sup>Athenaeus, pp. 405-407.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., Cf. Editor's notes.



evidently in contrast to the emmeleia and naked-boy-dance, was done to choral accompaniment. From the context in which Athenaeus referred to it, it was apparently filled with swift movement.<sup>174</sup> Allusions in the works of Aristophanes and the dancing figures found on vase paintings suggest that the basic steps of the kordax were

the high kick, forward and back, the pirouette, the twirl with outstretched leg, and the gastrismos; it was considered phortikos, suitable only for drunks, and obviously lent itself to indecency in execution. But the cordax was clearly not the staple stuff of the evolutions of the comic chorus; it was usually a pas seul, or at most the performance of coryphees, not of the corps de ballet.<sup>175</sup>

Certain elements in the description of this dance lead us to surmise that the fertility motif was probably more conspicuous in it than was any other. Athenaeus mentions it in connection with an Arcadian dance, the kidaris, which was performed in honor of Demeter Kitharia as a spell to induce fertility. He also speaks of a Syracusan dance "peculiar to the worship of Artemis Chitonea," a drunken dance called the ionic (attributed by Lucian to the Phrygians), and another dance of intoxication, the "messenger."<sup>176</sup> Cornford believes that the kordax is definitely "linked with the Peloponnesian cult of Artemis, the ancient Goddess of fertility."<sup>177</sup> One of the devices by which fertility was believed to be increased lay in the exhibition of the dancer's sex organs. This motif finds parallels in Greek and Japanese mythology. In Greece, the legend held that Demeter, the goddess of the fields, was angered by the abduction of her daughter Persephone. Withdrawing from the earth, she left behind her darkness and

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid., pp. 407-409.

<sup>175</sup>Dale, pp. 198-99.

<sup>176</sup>Athenaeus, p. 397. The name angelos, meaning "messenger," may also have been the Syracusan name for Artemis (Editor's note).

<sup>177</sup>Cornford, p. 157.

sterility, and it was not until Baubo joked with her and showed her his sex parts that she was placated and persuaded to resume her sovereignty.<sup>178</sup> Sachs claims that this incident was included in later rituals and in the final act of the Hellenic mysteries. The exhibition motif appears in refined form in an earlier period of ancient Greece when female temple dancers wore skirts which were so short that they did not reach the knees, and left the upper parts of their bodies completely bare.<sup>179</sup> This explanation of exhibitionism may provide insight into the notes which the editor of Athenaeus makes with respect to the term chitonea. He says that it may have referred to the goddess's very short tunic (chiton) or to the garments which were dedicated to her by women communicants.<sup>180</sup> Thus, if all these elements were present--intoxication, humor, obscenities, disrobing, exhibitionism--it is hard to escape the conclusion that the kordax was associated primarily with fertility functions, albeit with the probable intention of parodying them.

The satyric sikinnis, according to Athenaeus, was reputed to be similar to the pyrriche or war dance, if only in the intensity of its swift foot movements. Authors of antiquity had varied notions as to the origin of the term sikinnis. One view held that it came from Crete, an island famed for hunting and the dance; another held that it was derived from the verb seio ("shake") and that the foot movements were older and more complex than those of the arms; it was also believed to have been taken from kinesis, the word for "movement," "for the satyrs' dance is a movement very swift. For this dance has no depth of feeling, for which

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<sup>178</sup>Sachs, World History, p. 91.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>180</sup>Athenaeus, p. 397; Cf. Editor's notes.

reason it never slows up."<sup>181</sup> Athenaeus, however, hesitated to extend the comparison of the sikinnis and the pyrriche too far. Even though they were both characterized by speed, he was forced to concede that the pyrriche was definitely warlike and therefore used its speed in pantomiming the swift pursuits of war. Danced in full armour, with helmet, shield, and spear or sword, the pyrriche was performed for the purpose of mastering movements under arms. Spartan soldiers adapted it to the marching songs called enoplia (set to the well known dactylic rhythm which we identify today in the "bolero": ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩) and embateria, a combination of anapaests and spondees (♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩), and to the poems of Tyrtaeus which they recited from memory as they maintained the rhythm of the music.<sup>182</sup> But the pyrriche involved a great deal more than simply marching and singing; typical of weapon dances in general, it entailed a mock combat so skillfully rehearsed as to preclude the possibility of injury. It could be performed either as a solo or a choral dance, with the dancers all on one side or divided into opposing sides. Later forms of the pyrriche combined individual hand-to-hand combat with a form known as the chain round. Sachs describes this combination by saying,

Walking forwards within the dance circle, "each dancer attacks the man in front of him, then in the next moment turns around to defend himself from the blows of the one behind him." . . . We have here, perhaps, the peak of the European weapon dance. The pyrriche was notable not only for its detailed working out of the artistic, but also for its strict adherence to nature: it was rhythmic training, rhythmic preparation for war; the leading warriors were at the same time the leading dancers, and it used to be said of capable soldiers that they had developed their ability in the dance.<sup>183</sup>

In spite of Athenaeus' reluctance to carry the analogy any further than

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 401-403.  
p. 127.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid; also Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo,

<sup>183</sup> Sachs, World History, p. 110.



he did, however, there were very good reasons why he might have found similarities between the sikinnis and the pyrriche. These reasons inhere in the fact that no dance can be classified in terms of an exclusively singular field of meaning. Tracing the pyrriche back to its ritualistic role in the aetiological myth of the Diktean Zeus, one finds it associated with the Kouretes, who, Strabo tells us, were attendants of Zeus similar to the Satyrs that attended Dionysus.

They are certain young men who perform armed movements accompanied by dancing. They allege as their reason the myth about the birth of Zeus, in which Kronos is introduced with his habit of swallowing his children immediately after birth, and Rhea trying to conceal her birth-pangs and to get the new-born child out of the way and doing her utmost to save it. With a view to this she enlists the help of the Kouretes. They surround the goddess and with drums and with the din of other instruments try to strike terror into Kronos and to escape notice whilst trying to filch away the child. The child is then given over to them to be reared with the same care by which it was rescued.<sup>184</sup>

As Jane Ellen Harrison has pointed out, the passage from Strabo is not only the description of a myth but of a ritual enactment which either antedated the myth or arose simultaneously with it. In studying Greek religion, she warns, it is important to distinguish the comparatively permanent elements of a ritual from the shifting forms of its myth. To make such a distinction, however, does not imply that ritual is necessarily prior to myth.

They probably arose together. Ritual is the utterance of an emotion, a thing felt, in action, myth in words or thoughts. They arise pari passu. The myth is not at first aetiological, it does not arise to give a reason; it is representative, another form of utterance, of expression. When the emotion that started the ritual has died down and the ritual though hallowed by tradition seems unmeaning, a reason is sought in the myth and it is regarded as aetiological.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>The Geography of Strabo X.468; Tr. in Harrison, Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion, pp. 13-14.

<sup>185</sup>Harrison, p. 16.



In the myth which accompanied the ritual of the Diktean Zeus, Kronos, the infanticide, was a Titan. Other versions of the myth held that a group or race of men called Titans killed and dismembered the holy child. The word "Titans" is derived from titanos, meaning "white earth" or "clay." Thus, according to Harpocration, when the Titans tore Dionysus to pieces, they covered themselves with whitened gypsum so that they would not be recognized.<sup>186</sup> The essential thing to realize about this myth is that it obscured a long-standing ritual act in which the guardians of the child, the Kouretes themselves, were Titans. In other words, they were real men who disguised themselves with white clay in order to perform secret initiation rites. As time passed, however, and the association of the Kouretes with the Titans was lost, the Titans were mythologically interpreted as giants.<sup>187</sup>

Several parallels are at once evident in the pyrriche and the sikinnis. If the attendants of the Diktean Zeus disguised themselves by means of paint, armor, and weapons, those of Dionysus wore the ears, tails, and skins of animals, as well as the phalloi. The predisposition to costume and ornamentation indicates that both dances were strong in religious significance. In Sachs's opinion, they served one of two purposes: (1) to lift the dancer out of his everyday consciousness, to free him from self and bring him to a state of exhilaration or (2) to effectively enable him to convey the object of imitation. In an animal dance, for example, the dancer in his clothing and attributes must assume the traits of the animal imitated.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the two dances are comparable in that

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid., pp. 15, 17.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

<sup>188</sup>Sachs, World History, p. 134.

both contained elements of the mystery religions. Mention has already been made of the death and dismemberment of the child in the Diktean Zeus myth; let it be understood, therefore, that there was a rebirth of the child as well. This whole process suggests an initiatory act performed for and upon the child by his attendants. Likewise, the death-dismemberment-rebirth motif was a prominent part of Dionysian rituals, and the act of initiation formed the central core of the Eleusinian Mysteries which were dedicated to Dionysus. Such considerations indicate the presence of a strong narrative element in the pyrriche, at least, and probably in the sikinnis, since it was used in satyric drama. Athenaeus mentioned not only the narrative elements in the pyrriche of his day but also its Dionysiac features, saying, at one point, "the pyrriche of our times is rather Dionysiac in character and is more respectable than the ancient kind. For the dancers carry Bacchic wands in place of spears, they hurl also at one another stalks of fennel, they carry torches, and dance the story of Dionysus and India, or again the story of Pentheus."<sup>189</sup> He also remarked that one version of the pyrriche, mentioned by Aristophanes in The Centaur, was danced in many instances by women called maktristriai.<sup>190</sup>

It is quite possible that the pyrriche could have been performed in conjunction with the scene involving Agamemnon's homecoming. Aeschylus, in providing the stage directions for this scene, says that Agamemnon enters, riding in a chariot and accompanied by a great procession. He is hailed by the chorus in a hymn which honors him as a conquering hero, and Agamemnon responds to the tribute of the chorus in a long speech (ll. 796 to 854), the first half of which is a vivid re-creation of the sacking of

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<sup>189</sup>Athenaeus, pp. 403-405.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., p. 395.

Troy. This speech may well have provided the opportunity for the chorus, or even the women dancers mentioned by Athenaeus, to perform the pyrriche, pantomiming the vigorous movements of men in battle. The most important factor which emerges from this possibility is the realization that such pantomiming would have involved the chorus or the dancers in something far more elaborate than the formal, stylized, torso-centered gestures which have been traditionally envisioned. For the action of the pyrriche, as previously demonstrated, demanded swift foot motions and a pronounced movement of the dancer's body through space.

Other dances which were recognized by Athenaeus as professional, public performances were the kernophoros (a kernos was a tray or vessel which held many cups), the mongas (which may have been a dance accompanied by wild cries), and the thermaustris (described by Athenaeus' editor as "a wild and strenuous dance in which the performers leapt high in the air, crossing their legs many times before coming down").<sup>191</sup> If the characteristics attributed to these dances prevailed, then they were unmistakably fertility dances, particularly the thermaustris, for leaping is a motif symbolizing growth. It helps the dancer identify himself with the crops, the idea being that the higher he leaps, the taller the plants will grow. The "Hymn of the Kouretes" may consequently be regarded as accompanying a fertility dance in addition to its function as a part of an initiatory rite, for the Kouros is bidden by his attendants to come to Dikte that he may "leap for full jars, and leap for fleecy flocks, and leap for fields of fruit, and for hives to bring increase. . . . Leap for our Cities, and leap for our sea-borne ships, and leap for our young

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<sup>191</sup>Ibid.

citizens and for goodly Themis."<sup>192</sup> Harrison believes that this hymn derives from a period in the evolution of Greek religion when the Kouros had not become separate from his worshipers, when he was merely honored as chief Kourete, the foremost daimon, the most proficient dancer among the group, and so acclaimed as the leader. Such a possibility would have established an extremely high level of virtuosity for the dance leader and would have placed him squarely in the line of a professional tradition.

More interesting for the purposes of this study, however, is a dance that still persists today in the lowlands and coastal regions of Greece. Known as syrτος, a "dragging dance," it is performed by both men and women. Several sources would tend to substantiate the use of the term "limping dance" in describing this dance. Sachs, for one, states that the mythology of almost all peoples contains somewhere the idea of a limping god. Limping, in mythological terms, he declares, means "'to be still weak, to begin.' The great nature gods who live through the year, die at the end, and then come to life again in the spring with renewed youth, are without power at the beginning of their cyclical life and walk with a limp."<sup>193</sup> Robert Graves, however, points out that the weakness of these limping gods must be understood in a more specific sense, i.e. that of deformity or injury. In The White Goddess he quotes Plutarch's question, "Why do the women of Elis summon Dionysus in their hymns to come among them with his bull-foot?"<sup>194</sup> The answer proposed by Plutarch seems to be that "in ancient times the sacred king of the mystery

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<sup>192</sup>Harrison, p. 8.

<sup>193</sup>Sachs, World History, p. 356.

<sup>194</sup>Graves, p. 356.



drama who appeared in response to the invocation of the Three Graces really had a bull-foot." Graves interprets this answer as follows:

That is to say, the dislocation of his thigh made one of his feet resemble that of a bull, with the heel as the fetlock, and that he hurried among them with a rush and clatter of buskins.<sup>195</sup>

The result of the dislocation, then, was that the heel of the sacred king or god could never quite touch the ground; hence, he was obliged to walk only on the toes of the injured foot. Examples of this kind of lameness are found in Biblical literature as well as in mythology, e.g. Abraham, Jacob, Dionysus, Achilles, and Oedipus ("lame foot"). As a compensation for the handicap, Graves theorizes, the god wore the buskin, a high-heeled boot which was intended to minimize the limp.<sup>196</sup>

The mythological explanation of the sacred heel also contained the idea that it was the single point of the god-king's vulnerability. Not only was the heel kept from touching the ground; it was not to be exposed, for exposure stripped the god-king of his immortality and reduced him to the stature of a mortal man. From this point of view, the buskin acted as a safeguard. Thus, in the homecoming scene in Agamemnon, when Clytemnestra tempts Agamemnon to place his foot upon the crimson carpet leading into the palace, he at first refuses, offering as his excuse the obvious fact that such an action would be presumptuous and arrogant-- "such pomp beseems the gods, not me." In this way he seeks to avoid hybris. That the excuse he offers is not the real reason, however, is made clear when he finally accedes to his wife's pleading, prepares to step from his chariot, and bids a servant,

. . . . . loose  
Swiftly these sandals, slaves beneath my foot;

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<sup>195</sup>Ibid.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

And stepping thus upon the sea's rich dye,  
 I pray, Let none among the gods look down  
With jealous eye on me . . . . .<sup>197</sup>

In effect, then, Agamemnon willingly and consciously places his life in the keeping of Clytemnestra, for good or ill. His action is ritualistic, and it would have prepared the Athenian audience for the subsequent murder, which is described by Cassandra as a ritualistic death. Thus, the buskin, as it was used in the classical theatre, undoubtedly served to do more than simply increase the physical stature of the hero. With its high heel it would have contrasted with the customary flat-footed sandal by thrusting the whole body of the actor-dancer forward in a pitched posture which was reminiscent of the sacred king. The removal of the buskin, consequently, would have served as an anticipatory form of the peripeteia or reversal.

The limping dance can be perfectly reconciled with the discussion, in an earlier chapter of this study, of additive rhythms. Sachs has shown that cretic time (long-short-long in a ratio of 3:2), and probably any paeonic foot (i.e. a foot of five beats), was considered an ideal rhythm for jumping dances.<sup>198</sup> Recalling the discussion of arsis and thesis, one assumes that a favoring of the dislocated limb would normally place the full weight of the dancer's body on that part of the measure receiving the strongest and greatest number of beats, namely, the first three beats. This emphasis would leave the weakened foot the last two beats. Thus, an imitation of limping would strongly accentuate the thesis or downtread and deemphasize the arsis by a literal uplifting of

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<sup>197</sup> Aeschylus, Agamemnon (ll. 942ff), Tr. E. D. A. Morshead, in The Complete Greek Drama, Eds. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., p. 198.

<sup>198</sup> Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo, p. 125.

the heel. It is interesting to note, in the same context, that the term for this pattern of feet was "bent paion."<sup>199</sup>

If the mixed form which prevails in Macedonia today was known in ancient Greece (and the complex rhythmic patterns cited in the previous chapter suggest that it was known, at least, in some form), then the limping dance was often combined with the leaping dance in a complicated measure of nine beats. These beats were not distributed equally, as we might suppose, but probably fell into the pattern of either the contemporary tetrapody ( $3/8 + 2/8 + 2/8 + 2/8$ ) or the ancient dipody ( $4/8 + 5/8$ ), with the thesis occurring on beats one and six of the tetrapody and on beat five of the dipody.<sup>200</sup> A specific instance in the drama which might have been conducive to the combination of the limping and leaping dances occurs in Oedipus Rex, immediately after Jocasta has learned the truth about her husband-son and has rushed into the palace in "a transport of wild grief." Oedipus then determines once and for all to learn his origin. In the choral strophe and antistrophe which follow his speech (ll. 1073 to 1120), the chorus takes up the theme of the birth and exposure of the child on top of Mount Cithaeron. Moreover, it speculates about the parentage of Oedipus in mythological terms which recall the legends of mortal women who have given birth to the babes of gods. The whole atmosphere of the scene is suggestive of a Dionysiac epiphany; hence, the fertility motif of the leaping dance would have been entirely appropriate. Within this context, Oedipus' function as an incarnate god-king is increasingly revealed. This ritualistic significance would have

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<sup>199</sup>Supra, p. 75.

<sup>200</sup>Supra, p. 85; Cf. notes by Anoyanakis on the Choriaticos and the Antikristos Kyprou in the Greek Folk Songs and Dances album.

been intensified to an even greater degree if it could be proven that, during the singing and dancing of the chorus, Oedipus himself had danced, or even walked, in the lurching, halting gait of the "limping god." His name suggests that it was his habit to walk in this manner, and the association of such a movement with the names of other gods who had sacred heels--Dionysus and Mercury--would have reinforced the underlying significance of the ritual in which the sacred king was either sacrificed or deposed periodically. Since this choral interlude directly precedes the episode in which Oedipus learns the final truth, it is reasonable to speculate that the singing and dancing were again used as a means of anticipating the reversal. In other words, they served to "set the scene" for the ensuing action.

To appreciate the role which the dance played in the fifth century theatre, it is necessary to resume a consideration of convulsive or nonharmonic dance manifestations. Sachs feels that most forms of the dance in Greece remained mimetic and bound to the body, and that they employed open, expansive movements which, for the most part, reflected conscious and deliberate intention. Reference to Aristotle, however, opens this view to question, for at the very beginning of the Poetics (1447<sup>a</sup>. 15-29) Aristotle speaks of rhythm as a "fluctuating and bewildering power in sharp contrast to rational form." He says also that

a certain rhythm or melody, a certain tonality, rhythm, or musical interval will produce in the hearer a muscular tension or relaxation which could be equally produced by a wide variety of external sense impressions. The musical effect indeed reproduces the experience of life, but it reproduces it internally at a nervous and muscular level . . . [which is both more direct and more powerful than, for example, an inert art such as painting].<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Quoted in Warry, p. 109.



When these muscular and nervous responses are produced in a regularly recurring sequence or series at an extremely intense level, they lead the dancer unconsciously into a state of ecstasy. The state is of course greatly accelerated through supplementing the rhythmic pulsations with external devices such as intoxication, masks, and costumes, all of which contribute to a condition of Bacchic frenzy. The dancer then becomes a Bacchant who suffers violent paroxysms, a loss of self-will and often of consciousness. Winnington-Ingram characterizes the experience of Greek Bacchantes in these words:

They go to the mountains, where, remote from normal life, and in close touch with nature and the animals, they perform secret rites. Of these the central feature is a dance, accompanied by music of oboes and tambourines. Decorously it may begin, but its movements grow wilder and wilder, the Maenad's head is thrown back in ecstasy, her eyes roll or squint, her mouth foams, she has earned her name, she is a Mad Woman. In this dance the limitations of self are laid aside and the dancer feels at one with the god, with her fellows and with all nature.<sup>202</sup>

Certainly, the dance so described can be nothing but convulsive.

A distinguishing characteristic of the convulsive dance, then, is the communion with the god. It may go so far as to involve actual identification with the god, so that the dancer becomes the incarnation of the god. Aristides, in a choral fragment, states that the poet Alcman at times "becomes so God-inspired that . . . he is not only entheos in the ordinary sense of the word but speaks the God's actual words like a God from the machine, deus ex machina."<sup>203</sup>

When this pitch of emotion and exhilaration is reached, the phenomenon called "possession" occurs, with the result that from henceforth

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<sup>202</sup>R. P. Winnington-Ingram, Euripides and Dionysus, p. 155.

<sup>203</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 81.

the god "rides" the dancer in order to accomplish his divine will. In the case of a group of dancers, the dance leader is usually designated as the one through whom the god moves and speaks. He becomes the exarchos (celebrant) or "the god in the person of the celebrant." Is there not an analogy here between the Dionysiac exarchos and the shamanistic witch-doctor of primitive cultures? It seems quite probable that the god working through the celebrant has bewitched his followers in much the same manner as that in which a medicine-man casts a spell over his attendants. At any rate, when the ecstatic Bacchantes sing, "He who leads the cry of 'Evoe' is Bromius" (another name for Dionysus),<sup>204</sup> it is the dance leader or celebrant to whom they undoubtedly refer.

But there is no means of resolving the ecstasy in the dance itself, for, as Winnington-Ingram warns, "the intensity of emotion aroused must find some outlet, and the dance may turn into a hunt. A wild creature, a goat, a fawn or a bull, is pursued, pulled to the ground, torn limb from limb (sparagmos), and eaten raw (omophagia). Then the ecstasy passes and the Maenads return to peaceful activities."<sup>205</sup> The ritual action of this convulsive maenadism stems from the fact that the sacrificial animal is in reality a substitute for the god himself or, rather, the sacred king, who in earlier times was periodically killed and dismembered. The omophagy is thus a kind of sacrament in which the worshipers eat the god who is embodied in the sacred animal. This identification of the god with the intended victim sheds further light on the Dionysiac experience per se. It means that, along with his functions as patron of

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<sup>204</sup>Euripides, The Bacchae (l. 135); Tr. in Winnington-Ingram, p. 37.

<sup>205</sup>Winnington-Ingram, pp. 155-56.

the dithyramb and vegetation god, Dionysus must also be regarded as "the principle of animal life, tauros and taurophagos, the hunted and the hunter."<sup>206</sup> Such a role may help us to understand why one of the favorite incarnations of Dionysus was in the form of a bull. It should also teach us to be wary of the generalizations made by ancient writers, who often fabricated reasons for matters which they could not really explain. For example, one finds Athenaeus saying, "it is from the condition of drunkenness that Dionysus is likened to a bull, and, through his making drunken persons violent, to a leopard."<sup>207</sup>

One feels that it may have been this element of ecstasy which led Plato to denounce tragedians and "the rest of the imitative tribe." The dramatic poet, and, consequently, the actor, was rejected from Plato's well-ordered state "because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason. . . . for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater and less, but thinks the same thing at one time great and at another small--he is a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth."<sup>208</sup> It is possible that this criticism resulted from theatrical performances in which there was little discrimination between the simulated ecstasy of an actor and the convulsed suffering of an ecstatic dancer. If this were the case, then this lack of artistic discrimination could be regarded as one of the sources of the negative attitude toward actors and acting in general in the early years of the Christian era.

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<sup>206</sup>E. R. Dodds, Euripides' Bacchae, p. xvii; cited in Winnington-Ingram, p. 159.

<sup>207</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 425.

<sup>208</sup>Plato, The Republic X.595, 606; Tr. Benjamin Jowett, The Great Critics, pp. 7, 20.

The foregoing discussion of the dance would seem to justify two statements in regard to the influence of the dance on Greek music. First, the intensity of movement and complexity of rhythms employed in the mimetic dance entail a revision of the conventional attitude toward the simplicity and symmetry of the music. Although the music was for the most part monodic, it was by no means simple, for it utilized intervals which are completely unknown in contemporary western European compositions. Existing along side these intervals was a subtle interplay between strong, rhythmic accentuation (implemented by a wide variety of percussive instrumentation) and uneven, asymmetrical, additive patterns which were incorporated into dance figures using open, expansive, vigorous movements. Second, since symmetry and series are known to have contributed to ecstasy, the widespread testimony to Bacchic elements in almost all forms of the dramatic dance reinforces the traditional view that much Greek music was symmetrically constructed. But symmetry must not be considered as the all-pervading, exclusive factor it was once thought to be. Rather, it must be acknowledged as coexisting with asymmetrical forces in a kind of dualistic tension or continuum. Moreover, symmetrical melodies and binary rhythms often performed functions antithetical to rationalistic behavior. Even in highly stylized dances of a public and professional nature, these melodies and rhythms were intended to convey the essence of an ecstatic experience. To that end all the instruments and external paraphernalia associated with Dionysiac rites were implemented in a conscious, artistic imitation intended to catch up an audience in a vicarious participation in the events which were enacted before it.



## Chapter 10

### CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THEATRE PRACTICE

When making inferences concerning the effects of fifth century musical innovations upon the classical theatre, one must again come to grips with the traditional view in regard to the place of instruments in the theatre and, in particular, to the relationship which existed between instrumental music and vocal delivery. The first question to be explored concerns the nature of theatrical music itself. It is important not to be misled by Plato's preference for pure forms and unmixed harmonies, or to assume that the classical theatre was interested in maintaining rigid musical categories and inflexible musical styles. After all, Plato spoke in retrospect and from the viewpoint of an age that no longer recognized the subtle distinctions of the various harmonies. Moreover, Plato's aim was to preserve the tradition of classical music education which was rapidly disappearing. The poet-composer-dramatist of the fifth century, on the other hand, did not have education as his primary purpose.

From statements in the pseudo-Aristotelian Problems, it is obvious that the nature of tragedy had changed considerably during the course of the fifth century B. C. In its early years the drama relied heavily on poets who were primarily musicians because originally the lyrical parts of tragedies were more important than the purely spoken ones.<sup>209</sup> The chorus, for example, was the principal dramatic agent, while the actor

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<sup>209</sup>Problemata XIX.920<sup>a</sup>.

who spoke and did not sing his lines assumed only a minor role. With the appearance of Aeschylus, the predominance of the chorus reached an impressive climax and then began to be overshadowed by the emerging solo actor. This innovation in dramaturgy was naturally reflected in the structure of the music which was composed for the theatre, since the astrophic lyrics composed for the individual actor were much more conducive to improvisation and professional displays of virtuosity than the choric songs were. Conversely, one might imagine that the strophic songs of the chorus were fairly simple melodically and quite uncomplicated rhythmically. Indeed, the Problems attempts to provide an explanation in support of this latter conclusion. Declaring that antistrophic form did not easily lend itself to imitativeness, the work explains,

The reason is that in the old days free citizens themselves formed the choruses; it was difficult, therefore, for a large number to sing together like virtuosi, so they sang in one mode. For it is easier for a single person to make many changes than for a large chorus, and for a professional than for those who are preserving the character of the music. And so they made the music more simple for them. Now the antistrophic song is simple; for there is one rhythm and one unit of metre. For the same reason songs executed from the stage are not antistrophic, but those sung by the chorus are so; for the actor is a virtuoso and an imitator, but the chorus is less imitative.<sup>210</sup>

The key to the understanding of this passage seems to lie in the concept of imitation, as it was understood in Hellenistic times. In another place the author says that the Hypodorian and Hypophrygian modes are not suitable for use by the tragic chorus because they cannot be adapted to antistrophic melody. On the other hand, he notes, they are appropriate for use on the stage because they are imitative. It is clear that the author is thinking of a theatre in which the actors are separated

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid. XIX.918<sup>b</sup>.

from the chorus by some sort of stage. Whether or not he is trying to impose this same sort of arrangement on the classical theatre is not clear. At any rate, his understanding of imitation seems to equate it with realistic representation rather than symbolic presentation. It is reasonable, therefore, to conjecture that the music assigned to the solo actor was regarded as being more imitative than that given to the chorus inasmuch as it attempted to simulate the prose speech patterns of the vernacular. Choral lyric, at the same time, retained the archaic conventions of antistrophic form, traditional meters, and poetic diction. Thus, there was a discernible difference in the functions of the Hellenistic actor and chorus. The one tried to achieve a lifelike portrayal in terms of character, speech, and song, while the other sought to maintain a symbolic role in music and movement which were strangely incongruous with contemporary forms of choral lyric outside the theatre. (The dithyramb, for example, had by this time dispensed with antistrophic form and had, in the opinion of the writer of the Problems, become imitative.)

It is hazardous, however, to think of classical choral lyric in terms of a stereotyped simplicity. The report that the chorus was, in its early days, composed of "free citizens" does not at all imply that the standard of its performance or the calibre of its music was "amateurish," in the modern sense of the word. On the contrary, Dale's impressive analysis of lyric meters illustrates that, although they may have seemed simple to Hellenistic ears (i.e. in comparison to the lyrics of the solo actor), they are quite complex from our point of view and would require a high degree of artistry in order to be rendered precisely. Added to this consideration was the necessity of having a chorus that could not only sing but dance. This dual capacity suggests that the level of artistic

attainment among the ordinary citizens of classical Greece was indeed high. Such an assertion is made by Athenaeus, Plutarch, and Plato, who inform us that Greek males were required to receive regular instruction in music and the dance until they reached thirty years of age. Greek maidens were also given a formal musical education which placed great emphasis on orchestics, but it is not known how long that education was extended.

The divergence in function between the solo actor and chorus of the fifth century can be further clarified by associating the music which was assigned to each agent with the tradition of vocal delivery which prevailed in the classical theatre. With respect to the solo actor, Pickard-Cambridge designates three types of utterance:

speech unaccompanied by music, speech accompanied by an instrument (or what is conventionally termed recitative), and song. The first was normally employed for the portions of a play written in iambic trimeters (the metre considered most akin to prose speech), whether in dialogue or monologue, the second for the delivery of tetrameters and of iambs inserted in the midst of lyric systems, the third for lyrics.<sup>211</sup>

Only a few texts, he claims, provide evidence relating to this classification, and, save for the area of "recitative," they present no difficulties. While this judgment can be accepted in regard to song, there is some question as to whether the parts of a play written in iambic trimeters were delivered in unaccompanied speech. Dale is rather inclined to relegate them to the category of recitative, which she describes as a tradition of "mixed delivery" originating with the seventh-century poet Archilochus. The term "mixed delivery" seems to be more satisfactory than "recitative," for it avoids the latter's association with the

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<sup>211</sup>Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 153-54.



oratorio. "Recitative in songs," Dale writes, "means bits of recitative in the middle of singing, the intrusion of the speaking voice for emotional effect." She then goes on to say,

The only iambs in tragedy which seem appropriate for a mixture of singing and recitative are those trimeters which occur so often . . . in actors' lyrics and in kommoi, though they are occasionally heard from the orchestra too. But Euripides has a special group of metres which he associates in a manner peculiar to himself with this trimeter-dochmiac mixture . . . What the special group have in common, in fact, is proximity to some recitative or spoken metre into which they can easily pass, so that a mixed style of delivery is possible without too violent a disturbance of continuity. Their use is characteristic of scenes of emotional tension, and such a song with fragments of declamation would naturally be most commonly a solo. [But, she notes, as a possibility] If this interpretation of the deinon ponon in the Orestes papyrus is correct, Euripides sometimes sought the emotional irregularity of mixed delivery in choral lyric too.<sup>212</sup>

It might also be added that, if Dale's interpretation is correct, this mixed delivery played a much larger part in the vocal tradition of the theatre than has been suspected heretofore. It would be interesting as well to learn of the proportions to which the purely spoken parts of the plays were diminished. Behind such speculations there is the possibility that the Greek drama contained more musical activity than it did any other single form of artistic expression. In view of the limited evidence, this hypothesis cannot be phrased as an assertion. Yet, this brief insight into the nature of mixed delivery seems to substantiate the view that theatrical music was regarded as imitative to the degree that it approached the patterns of actual speech. The approach, however, must not be misconstrued in terms of pitch correspondence. It should be understood that it was an attempt made in the realms of rhythm and meter. Thus, it would have been possible, by some modification of the strictly

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<sup>212</sup>Dale, p. 198.

metrical systems of choral lyric, to give the chorus as well as the actor occasional imitative functions. At least, that possibility is raised by Pickard-Cambridge's discussion of the mixed delivery in the plays of Aristophanes. Referring to that delivery as parakataloge, he declares,

The transition in Aristophanes, Peace 1171, from sung lyrics to recited trochaic tetrameters in the same sentence would be much more difficult unless both were accompanied by the same instrument. The scholiast on Aristophanes' Clouds 1352 . . . speaks of the chorus's dancing during the delivery by an actor of the various tetrameter systems--trochaic, anapaestic, and iambic, and as the choral dance must in all probability have been accompanied by the flute, the same accompaniment must have served for the actor delivering his address. It is not surprising that this intermediate kind of delivery is sometimes called "singing," sometimes "speaking." Hesychius speaks of anapaista as ta en tais parabasesi ten choron asmata [lit., "the songs in the stepping forward of the chorus" or "the choric songs of the parabases."], though Aristophanes himself describes the chorus as "speaking" the parabasis. [Knights 507-509] (There is the same inconsistency as regards the close . . . of comedy, which generally took the form of recited or sung lines, but is described by a late grammarian as to epi telei legomenon tou choron [lit., "the saying at the end of the chorus" or "the choric utterance coming at the close of the ritual."]. . . )<sup>213</sup>

The word parakataloge was derived from the expression katalegein para ten krousin, which may be translated, "to tell (or repeat) with the torrent of words." Its traditional linking with instrumental accompaniment raises the question of how instruments cooperated with the voice in theatrical presentations or, for that matter, of how instrumental music itself was implemented into dramatic performances.

In reference to vocal music accompanied by the lyre, Plato wrote, "the lyre should be used together with the voices, for the clearness of its strings, the player and the pupil producing note for note in unison."<sup>214</sup> Sachs explains that this unison was produced by a curious technique in

<sup>213</sup>Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 155-56.

<sup>214</sup>New Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, p. 338.

which the instrumentalist used his left hand as a damper to deaden all the strings except one while the right hand with a plectron scratched across all the strings at once and sounded only the single note that was not deadened by the left hand.<sup>215</sup> The effect which must have been produced was an extremely percussive one, analogous to the current reaction that occurs when one sits too close to a harpist and is distracted by the way in which the plucking of the strings interferes with the production of the musical sound.

In solo performances, on the other hand, the lyre and kithara were played like a harp, with the bare fingers of both hands. This practice would have served to enhance the musical impression since the strumming of strings is far pleasanter than their plucking with a hard object. This technique may have a bearing on the manner in which voices and strings cooperated in professional performances. Plato made clear, in the previous passage, that his preference for unison of voices and strings applied particularly, and perhaps exclusively, to the kind of music considered appropriate to the classroom. At the same time, by listing what he felt were abuses of a proper musical education, he indicated what the professional practices of fifth century string players might have been, namely,

heterophony and embroidery by the lyre--the strings throwing out melodic lines different to the melodia which the poet composed; crowded notes where his are sparse, quick time to his slow, high pitch to his low, whether in concert or antiphony, and similarly all sorts of rhythmic complications of the lyre against the voices--none of this should be imposed upon pupils who have to snatch out a working knowledge of music rapidly in three years.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup>Sachs, Our Musical Heritage, p. 35.

<sup>216</sup>New Oxford History of Music, Vol. I, p. 338.



On the basis of this passage, it is evident that there was some discrepancy between the singer's part and that of the instrumentalist. This variation has bred much controversy among scholars, and there is marked disagreement about whether the Greeks had any knowledge of polyphony and counterpoint. Sachs believes that the only sound basis on which any theory can be reasonably formulated is an examination of the polyphonic forms of primitive cultures and the ancient Orient. While admitting that the Greeks knew no vocal polyphony "except those octave parallels forced upon singing by the cooperation of high-and-low-pitched singers in choruses," he nevertheless says,

Things were different in accompanied vocal pieces and purely instrumental music. . . . We do not know how closely the instrument followed the voice; but we know for certain that the strict unison that most modern authors have claimed for preclassical times is out of the question. Unison is neither usual nor even natural--nowhere in the primitive or Oriental world has such a practice existed. The role of instruments is often confined to just restriking the main note, to adding a short ostinato motif, or to playing "heterophonically," that is, in our own words, to interpreting the same melody according to the personal tastes and abilities of the players and to the special conditions of their instruments without caring "for the consonant, or at least pregnant, character of their collisions."<sup>217</sup>

Whether or not the issue will ever be resolved in favor of the Greeks' having used polyphonic forms is unimportant for the purpose of this study. What does matter is the obvious dissimilarity of vocal music to instrumental accompaniment, a dissimilarity in melodic line, in the juxtaposition of intervals, in rhythm and meter, and in the range of pitch deemed appropriate to each area. We know from Aristoxenus and the pseudo-Aristotelian writer that instrumental accompaniment, whether by lyre or aulos, normally followed the voice at an interval of a fourth, a fifth, or even

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<sup>217</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, pp. 256-57.



an octave higher than the voice part.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, Sachs informs us that those whom Plutarch called "the ancients" used the consonances of c<sup>1</sup>-f, d<sup>1</sup>-g, d<sup>1</sup>-a, e<sup>1</sup>-a and the dissonances of d<sup>1</sup>-b, d<sup>1</sup>-c, and e<sup>1</sup>-d. "Such rudimentary harmony must have been the rule," he observes, "for Plutarch relates that those musicians who opposed the enharmonic genus put it to 'the incompatibility of quarter tones with consonance.'"<sup>219</sup>

In answer to the question of how the aulos cooperated with the human voice, Sachs says that ancient sources indicate that it accompanied by means of "(1) preludes, interludes, and postludes [as in the neo-Hellenic "Moirologhia"; supra, pp. 35-36]; (2) occasional consonances, as octaves, fifths, and fourths . . . [and] (3) free counterpoint, maybe of the heterophonic kind."<sup>220</sup> On the surface, consequently, there would seem to have been little difference between vocal music accompanied by the aulos and that which was sung to the lyre. Actually, however, there was a conspicuous contrast in the two types of accompaniment, a contrast which is clarified at once when one familiarizes himself with the nature of the aulos. Its tone and timbre were comparable to those of a modern oboe or, to be more precise, a bagpipe. The analogy to the bagpipe can be carried further in that the double pipes of the aulos were often sustained by a bellows-like formation of the cheeks which enabled one of the pipes to maintain a continuous drone while the other went on to accompany the voice in the manner already suggested.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup>Aristoxenus, pp. 235, 237, 243; Problemata XIX.918<sup>a</sup>, 922<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>219</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 258.

<sup>220</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, Our Musical Heritage, p. 36.

<sup>221</sup>Harvard Dictionary, p. 62; Sachs, The History of Musical Instruments, p. 138.

The use of the aulos in warfare and other military operations foreshadows the marching to battle of Scottish regiments who were accompanied by a corps of bagpipers. Lang describes the function of the aulos as an instrument of war when he states,

Of all the instruments the aulos occupied the chief place. Herodotus, Plutarch, Thucydides, and Gellius furnish us with ample data concerning this military music. . . . The use of the aulos was by no means left to the spur of the moment; in typical Greek fashion it had its well-defined role. The soldiers marched to battle to the sound of the aulos to retain an orderly grouping of ranks. The aulos players were distributed among them at strategic points. Before the battle the aulete played a "prelude" which was supposed to put the soldiers in the proper mood for fighting, while the so-called Castor-song gave the signal for the attack.<sup>222</sup>

This use of the aulos may provide further insight into the nature of the agon of Aristophanic comedy which, in many instances, took the form of a pitched battle waged by the equal halves of the chorus under the respective leadership of the antagonist and protagonist. Since we already know that the aulos was regarded as the favorite instrument of the dance chorus, it is entirely probable that it was used in connection with the pyrriche as an imitation of its use in actual warfare. At least, this is the inference derived from Cornford's mention of the aulos music that occupied such a prominent place in the folk rituals which antedated the Old Comedy.<sup>223</sup> If the inference is warranted, then it necessitates a revaluation of Pickard-Cambridge's view that "little use seems to have been made in the classical drama of instrumental music apart from words."<sup>224</sup> Such a view fails to take into consideration the mesaulika (interludes for pipes between vocal sections) and kroumata (pieces for stringed instruments without singing), which may easily have occurred in periods in which the dance

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<sup>222</sup>Lang, p. 16.

<sup>223</sup>Cornford, see Chapter 3.

<sup>224</sup>Pickard-Cambridge, p. 266.

predominated.<sup>225</sup> It also relegates purely instrumental music to the narrow realm of special effects in which the aulos supposedly reproduced the singing of a nightingale and the lyre suggested the croaking of frogs in the Stygian swamp.<sup>226</sup>

Taking into consideration the shrill quality of the aulos and its widespread association with the dance, one wonders why this was the instrument preferred for accompanying the singing and mixed delivery of the drama. Since the aulos tended to cover up the voice, nontheatrical musical practice was practically unanimous in its choice of the lyre, or kithara, as the most fitting accompaniment to the voice. Why, then, should this traditional procedure have been reversed in the theatre?

Assuming that the scholars are right and that the normal practice was abandoned in the theatre, one is forced to make all sorts of ingenious attempts to explain and qualify such a departure. First of all, one must remember that the conditions of performance in the first part of the fifth century B. C. were a far cry from what they were at its close. The Suppliant Women of Aeschylus exhibits a chorus unlike anything which can be found in later fifth century drama. This is a play in which spectacle predominates and in which the mimetic dancing and singing of the chorus are the chief ingredients. In such a situation, the penetrating tone of the aulos would have contributed to the precision of movement and utterance of so large a group; it was thus ideally suited to a theatre in which the chorus predominated.

Would this suitability, on the other hand, have applied equally to the type of drama which prevailed in the latter fifth century? Offhand,

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<sup>225</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 203.

<sup>226</sup>Pickard-Cambridge, Ibid.

the answer would appear to be in the negative. As the part of the solo actor expanded and became more integrally related to the play as a whole, the natural expectation would be that any influence or ingredient which tended to detract from his delivery would have been excised or, at least, minimized. Yet, one must consider the scholiast on Aristophanes' Clouds (ll. 1352ff) who claims that the chorus danced while an actor recited at length the various tetrameter systems. If such was the case, then the actor not only had to compete with the sound of the aulos but also with the visual entrancement of a moving chorus. Pickard-Cambridge tries to resolve this dilemma by saying that it is unlikely that such passages took much time in presentation. It is doubtful, however, that Athenian audiences would have been tolerant of such distractions, regardless of the length of time involved.

It seems necessary, therefore, to reexamine the extent to which the lyre was used in the theatre in conjunction with the aulos. If it can be shown that the lyre functioned in dramatic performances in the same manner that it did on nontheatrical occasions, situations like the one cited from the Clouds will present fewer problems in interpretation. It is important, then, to ascertain from the evidence available whether there are facts which point to a possible association of the aulos and the lyre in the theatre.

A passage in Athenaeus contains a quotation from a lost play in which reference is made to the music of the auloi and the lyre as "a joint partner in our stage plays."<sup>227</sup> One may infer, from the context of this passage, that such music was in a real sense a contest between the

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<sup>227</sup>Athenaeus, p. 327.



two instrumentalists in which each tried either to outguess the other or to imitate him. Furthermore, it seems probable that the two instruments were used as a simultaneous accompaniment to the dancing chorus and that the imitation in this case consisted of matching dance-rhythms with metrical patterns. Such a practice would have been entirely consistent with musical expressions outside the theatre. In the realm of ritual, for example, Lucian has recorded that all the sacrifices at Delos were accompanied with dancing to the flute and the lyre.<sup>228</sup> The "Hymn of the Kouretes," describing a rite at least as old as the fifth century B. C., includes these words in its invocation to the Diktean Zeus:

To Dikte for the Year, Oh, march, and rejoice in the dance and song,  
That we make to thee with harps and pipes mingled together, and  
sing as we come to a stand at thy well-fenced altar.<sup>229</sup>

In the Frogs of Aristophanes a contest is staged similar to that suggested by the passage in Athenaeus. Aristophanes has apparently subordinated the instrumental contest to a larger one in which the judge is Dionysus and the contestants, Aeschylus and Euripides. The chorus comprises the souls of dead frogs who are Orphic initiates, and, as might be expected, their simple chants are accompanied by the aulos. The competition between Aeschylus and Euripides, however, is punctuated from time to time by the tophlattothrat-tophlattothrat of the lyre. In spite of this evidence of the association of lyre and aulos, Pickard-Cambridge prefers to believe that the lyre was employed in the drama only for special effects and for the occasional accompaniment of monodies.<sup>230</sup> His explanation of the lyre in the case cited is that neither poet could have

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<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Harrison, p. 7.

<sup>230</sup>Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 163-64.

parodied the lines of his rival and accompanied them himself on anything but the lyre--certainly, not on the aulos. But this observation on the use of the lyre seems to be entirely beside the point. One must keep in mind continually the satiric intent of Aristophanic comedy, an intent which is often misleading and rarely obvious. In this play, accordingly, the avowed purpose is to uphold Aeschylean poetry by ridiculing the prosaic qualities of Euripidean verse. But is this the only purpose or, for that matter, even the main one? Does Aeschylus really emerge from the conflict unscathed, and is his resulting position much better than that of Euripides? It would be difficult to answer both questions in the affirmative, for in reality the poetry of both men is travestied. Aeschylean verses are declared pompous and overblown, and those of Euripides are appraised as insubstantial and sophistic. Moreover, the deciding factor in acclaiming Aeschylus the victor has no relation at all to the sublimity of his expression or the appropriateness of his poetry to its theme. The decision is based on an absurdity--on the evaluation of Aeschylean diction in terms of how much it would weigh when placed in a hand-scales. In the light of this farcical contest, then, it is evident that Aristophanes' satire is aimed at more than simply the poetry of the two tragedians. It would be entirely reasonable to view his attack as one which was aimed at the entire process of theatrical production in his time. This interpretation is partly supported by Murray's insistence that the protest against the music of the late fifth century was part of a general reaction known as the Attic Reformation. It reached its climax following the defeat of Athens and the ascendancy of Sparta, and it entailed a retaliatory "pruning of the exuberance of Ionia" and "an insistence on severity, discipline,

and what may be called the Dorian side of life."<sup>231</sup> What better way could Aristophanes have chosen to ridicule the excesses and unrestrained license of contemporary theatrical music than to have staged a competition in eloquence against a background of lyre and aulos which, in conjunction with the croaking of the chorus of frogs, was probably so cacophonous that neither poet could have been heard distinctly?

Although both Pickard-Cambridge and Sachs believe that percussive instruments as such were seldom found in theatrical music, textual evidence within certain plays points to the use of castanets, cymbals, tambourines, and drums.<sup>232</sup> Since these instruments were popularly associated with the earth cults of Asia Minor, their use in a play, as noted in the preceding chapter, would undoubtedly have intensified the Dionysiac elements. A specific example can be found in The Bacchae of Euripides, in which the playwright has Dionysus make overt references to the drums used in his cult. The god summons the Bacchantes who have accompanied him to Thebes from Lydia to "rouse the drums native to the city of the Phrygians, which Rhea the great mother and I invented; come and beat them about the royal palace of Pentheus, that the city of Cadmus may see."<sup>233</sup> These drums, Winnington-Ingram insists, are integral to the rhythm of this play in their provision of a "ground-bass" to the action and dialogue. If the observation of Plutarch was accurate, then the drums may have maintained this ground-bass in the widely recognized rhythm of the choree, a variety of "three" time comprised almost entirely of short beats.<sup>234</sup> Such rhythm,

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<sup>231</sup>Murray, p. 70.      <sup>232</sup>Frogs (ll. 1305ff); The Bacchae (ll. 42-98).

<sup>233</sup>Euripides, The Bacchae (ll. 55-61); Tr. Winnington-Ingram, p. 32.

<sup>234</sup>Plutarch says that the choree was used frequently in the melodies employed in the worship of Cybele; Cf. Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, pp. 7-9.

of course, would have been more appropriate for the chorus than for solo dancers, for the persistent short beats, accentuated in all probability on the first of every three-beat group, would have provided an effective simulation of the uniformity and regularity of ecstatic dance-rhythms outside the theatre.

The rhythm associated with Dionysus himself, however, must have been the bacchic or some form of the paeonic, because this play calls forth the image of Dionysus the Bull-God. As already stated, that image would have been most suitably evoked through the use of "limping meters." Another circumstance which lends support to the association of such rhythms with Dionysus is that the image of the Bull-God is identified at the moment when Pentheus, dressed like a Bacchant and possessed by Bacchic ecstasy, confronts the god in person. Without knowing that this stranger is the god, Pentheus nevertheless believes that the stranger has become the exarchos, the god in the person of the celebrant, for he addresses him in these words:

Yea; and mine eye  
Is bright! Yon sun shines twofold in the sky,  
Thebes twofold and the Wall of Seven Gates. . . .  
And is it a Wild Bull this, that walks and waits  
Before me? There are horns upon thy brow!  
What art thou, man or beast? For surely now  
The Bull is on thee!<sup>235</sup>

Indeed, Winnington-Ingram refers specifically to the dance which accompanies this passage as a bacchic dance.<sup>236</sup> The term "bacchic" in this context doubtless pertains not only to the type of rhythm but to the manner of movement being employed. Whether Pentheus does the dance himself

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<sup>235</sup>Euripides, The Bacchae (ll. 918-22); Tr. Gilbert Murray in The Complete Greek Drama, p. 262.

<sup>236</sup>Winnington-Ingram, p. 118.



or describes the mimetic movements by which Dionysus lures him into danger, we do not know. That the dance is mimetic, however, ought to be obvious, for it is a vivid re-creation of the ecstatic experience in which the dancer is possessed by the god. Pentheus exhibits all the manifestations of the true Bacchant: he is clothed in the ritualistic costume which enables the dancer to assume a different identity, he is intoxicated, he displays the glazed eyes and double vision of the Bacchic devotee, and he bears the symbol of the god, the thyrsus. There is in this play, then, the skillful interplay between repetitive and varied rhythms, abstract and mimetic dance forms. The consequent impression could well have been one capable of reinforcing the popular belief that the Dionysiac experience was overwhelming and all-encompassing, and that it allowed no permanent means of escape.<sup>237</sup>

One more observation must be made about the extent to which fivefold rhythms might have been used in the theatre of the fifth century B. C. The chapter on dance has shown that the prosodiac (long-long-short in a ratio of 2:3) was adapted to marching songs and, possibly, to the pyrriche. The possibility also exists that it was used in the processional portions of the drama. Plutarch may have cited a precedent for such usage when he declared that Lasus of Hermione had transferred the prosodiac, the choree, and the bacchic to the sphere of the dithyramb, thereby producing "a change in the existing system of music."<sup>238</sup> Moreover, Athenaeus cites Aristoxenus as the authority for his statement that the "ancients" practiced first the naked-boy dance and then proceeded into the pyrriche before

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<sup>237</sup>Winnington-Ingram in fact accepts this theme as the essential message of The Bacchae, i.e. that it was a warning against the effects of mass hysteria.

<sup>238</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. II, p. 225.

entering the theatre.<sup>239</sup> A tradition of dramatic dance in conjunction with fivefold rhythms was evidently well established, therefore, before the classical theatre had become an actuality. One might consequently hypothesize that these rhythms, when coupled with the mimetic character of the ritualistic dances done by the worshipers of Dionysus, might have fostered a tradition in which the parados of a Greek play was regarded as a stylized form of invocation wherein, by pantomiming the limping, halting gait of the bull-footed god, the chorus of dancers called upon Dionysus to be present at the reenactment of the myth. Certain structural features of the early Theatre of Dionysus at Athens would seem to bear out this theory of the parados and its function. First of all, one notes the central prominence of the thymele and altar. Secondly, there is the matter of the proximity of the dancing circle to the temple of Dionysus, from which the holy image of the god was borne on festival days so that he might enjoy the performances which were dedicated to him.<sup>240</sup> Finally, one is reminded of the throne upon which the priest of Dionysus sat during the presentation of the plays. The acceptance of this theory would of course require the abandonment of the conventional view that dactyls and anapaests were the exclusive property of marching rhythms, and that they were used in the drama specifically for the parados and exodos.

The nuclear arrangement of the classical theatre was discussed previously in relation to the concept of musical space. That discussion brought out the cyclical nature of the Greek plays, each one of which was concerned with a particular tragic hero, but always within the context of the Dionysian myth of death and regeneration. An inherent duality was thereby noted in the structure of the drama, which illustrated both a

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<sup>239</sup>Athenaeus, p. 407.

<sup>240</sup>Bieber, p. 55.

permanence of theme and a mutability of motif. Admittedly, the actor retained his identity as an individual agent; he was allowed much freedom of movement and was given opportunities to display his virtuosity as a singer and dancer.<sup>241</sup> The chorus, in contrast to the solo actor, was held in strict submission to the dance leader. This is not to say that the dancing and singing of the chorus were any the less skillful than the performance of the actor; it is simply an acknowledgment that the chorus acted en masse, always taking its direction from the coryphaeus. This separation in function did not, however, entail a separation in space; nor did it mean that the individual actor was raised to a level above that of the dancing-circle. It has never been established that there were any background buildings in the precinct of Dionysus Eleuthereus before the middle of the fifth century B. C. In fact, Bieber contends that "the great orchestra, the steep approach [the paradoi], and the small temple were . . . the only buildings in the precinct until about 450 B. C."<sup>242</sup> Continuing, she insists that the most important spatial consideration to remember about the Greek theatre is that "in the classical age there was no such thing as a raised stage."<sup>243</sup> If her investigation is accepted, then one must reject Sachs's placement of the tragic chorus "in a semi-circle in front of the stage."<sup>244</sup> Indeed, the Sachs view seems more appropriate to the Hellenistic skene than to the classical orchestra.

Consequently, if the actor was not separated from the chorus,

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<sup>241</sup>Athenaeus records that Telestes, Aeschylus' main dancer, was "so artistic that when he danced the Seven Against Thebes he made the action clear simply by dancing"; Cf. Nagler, pp. 6-7.

<sup>242</sup>Bieber, p. 57.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>244</sup>Sachs, The Rise of Music, p. 268.

and if both remained in the orchestral area, then their differences in function would have had to be suggested by other means. This necessity may account for the fact that the actor was assigned types of melody, meter, rhythm, and dance which were different from those of the chorus. A decisive visual distinction could have been made, obviously, by the kind of movement assigned respectively to the actor and the chorus. The episodes cited from Agamemnon, Oedipus, and The Bacchae indicate that the movement of individual actors was generally inclined toward the immediate, the particular, the mimetic. That of the chorus, on the contrary, may have favored attitudes and motions which were more universal in meaning, more comprehensive in symbolism, and more abstract in visual design.

One point regarding the formations of the chorus, however, ought to be clarified. Most authorities on the Greek theatre maintain that the chorus of the fifth century was grouped in lines or ranks rather than in circular forms. This view may be the result of imposing comparatively modern conventions upon the classical theatre. That is, it unintentionally speaks from the perspective of the proscenium theatre or, at least, a theatre in which the audience customarily sits in front of the actors and on one level. In such a situation one could speak of the rank of the chorus which directly faced him. But in the theatre of the fifth century, such a perspective would have been impossible. To begin with, in the classical theatre the seats of the auditorium surrounded probably two-thirds of the orchestra. This physical fact established a condition in which no single point of reference was possible for the spectator--with one exception, the central altar. In this nuclear-oriented theatre, then, it is absurd to think of the movements of the chorus as having been dictated by a single section of the audience; instead, space, in such an



arrangement would have been either dynamic or thetic. The closer the chorus moved to the center, the more positive the space would have become; conversely, the farther the chorus moved away from the center, the more relative and dynamic the space would have seemed. This condition appears to warrant the conclusion, then, that when the function of the chorus was to reinforce the significance of the underlying myth, its movements would in some way have been related to the central altar. On the other hand, when it wanted to develop the dynamic possibilities of a particular motif, the dancing would probably have taken place either near the circumference of the orchestral circle or would have avoided any direct association with the altar.

With this discussion of spatial arrangement in mind, one may accept the dictum that the chorus moved in lines (stoicheia), but with new understanding. A specific case in point is Sachs's observation that

the chorus . . . entered the stage with the parados and left it with the exodos; singing the strophe, it turned to the right to picture the orbit of the stars, so Michael Psellos, the Byzantine, said; in the antistrophe, it turned in the opposite direction. The songs between these two marchlike movements, sung in place, were called stasima or "stationary" (which Psellos called the steady harmony of the earth).<sup>245</sup>

This passage indicates that Sachs unwittingly views the chorus from the position of "front row center," a meaningless term in an arena-type theatre. How else can he refer to the chorus as marching first to the right and then to the left? When one recalls the central orientation of the theatre, however, the possibility occurs that this is an instance in which the symbol of the wheel may have been used to connote the circular movement of the universe. In that case, the lines or ranks formed by the

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<sup>245</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

chorus would not have been either parallel to or perpendicular to the audience, as Sachs suggests, but they would have radiated from the center of the orchestra. Thus, in "moving to the right," the chorus would simply have rotated in a clockwise direction, which would have been more apropos to the idea of the stars wheeling in their orbits. In the antistrophe, likewise, the chorus would have rotated in the opposite direction. This interpretation of the lines of the chorus and their placement in the orchestra is borne out by numerous references to cyclic choruses and to their arrangements in lines. Among them is Proclus (410?-485) the philosopher, who said that, according to Aristocles, the originator of the dithyramb was Arion "the first trainer of the cyclic or circular chorus."<sup>246</sup> Achilles Tatius said, with reference to the lines of the chorus, "there are four spheres, and these are called by the ancients stoicheia because each of them lies in a row or rank."<sup>247</sup>

This study of Greek music has brought to light certain considerations which may well provide us with a more accurate grasp of the aesthetic of the fifth century theatre. First of all, from the examination of the relationship between instrumental music and vocal delivery, several important factors emerged. It was discovered, for example, that the aulos was by no means considered to be the exclusive instrument of the theatre as scholars have heretofore assumed. It frequently was joined with the lyre in duets and accompaniments and was often laid aside by soloists who favored the lyre for accompanying monodies. These two instruments were at times embellished by the percussive sounds of drums, cymbals, castanets, and rattles which accentuated the rhythmic beat of the

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<sup>246</sup>Lyra Graeca, Vol. I, p. 139.    <sup>247</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

music. The manner in which instrumental music was employed in the theatre and the extent to which it was used suggest also that the spoken text of the drama was not always given the preëminence it enjoys in the modern theatre. Moreover, the complaints of fifth century critics that instrumental embellishments obscured the sound and meanings of the words indicate that music was not at all relegated to a subordinate position in dramatic performances.

Secondly, the discussion of the place which music and the dance occupied in the fifth century theatre may furnish us with further insight into the Aristotelian concept of imitation. Ethical force was attributed to rhythms and melodies by both rhetoricians and musicians. Consequently, music was employed as a means of conveying the character of a certain dramatic action to an audience in order to condition the emotional response which was sought by the playwright. Again "imitation" contained the added meaning of "representation," so that a dramatic action, in order to be convincing, often had to simulate in its language the prose patterns of vernacular speech. The imitation was further reinforced by mimetic gestures and dancing which were unmistakable in their import.

Thirdly, an acquaintance with the type of melodic forms, the complex rhythms and meters, and the intricate dance figures which prevailed in the fifth century B. C. entails a new appreciation of the Greek chorus. While, admittedly, that chorus consisted primarily of amateurs, it is evident, nevertheless, that the activity of the chorus must have demanded a very high level of competence and even artistry. There is also a possibility that the skill of the tragic chorus may have contributed to the tradition that Sophocles invented skenographia. Since it is doubtful

that a skene existed during Sophocles' lifetime, and since it is reputed that he assigned new roles and functions to the chorus, the likelihood prevails that Sophocles trained his chorus in such a way that, during the instrumental interludes between the episodes, the chorus was able to "set the scene" for the ensuing action by means of pantomime and symbolic movement.

Fourthly, the analysis of the rhythms and motifs of the dance, when supplemented by an understanding of the ecstasy which inhered in the dance and which was bound up with ritualistic content, belies the conventional view that the classical theatre was first and foremost concerned with the cardinal virtues of reason, balance, and order. While much fifth century drama was unquestionably devoted to a rationalization of man's place in the universe, it is also evident that the Dionysiac elements of the drama were more conspicuous than has been supposed. In fact, The Bacchae of Euripides was given over completely to an exposition of the ecstatic experience and of the way in which it complemented, and sometimes usurped, man's rational nature.

Finally, a comprehension of "musical space," combined with an appreciation of the physical structure of the classical theatre, enables us to envision the relationships which may have prevailed between the individual actor and the chorus. It also permits us to speculate more lucidly about the manner in which choreographic forms may have been used to intensify the mythological content of each play.



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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gerald Byrd Forbes was born March 31, 1929, at Cleveland, Ohio. In 1947 he graduated from Ashtabula Harbor High School, Ashtabula, Ohio. In 1952 he received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Bethany College, Bethany, West Virginia. From 1952 to 1954 he served as resident pastor of the Park Street Christian Church in Geneva, Ohio. In 1954 he entered Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana, where he held a teaching assistantship in the Department of Speech, Radio, Television, and Drama. In 1959 he was graduated from that institution with the Bachelor of Divinity degree. In 1959 he enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Florida, where he began his work for the Master of Arts degree. From 1959 to 1963 he held a graduate assistantship in the Department of Speech. Since receiving his master's degree on April 20, 1963, he has been employed as an Interim Instructor in the C-3 Department.

Gerald Byrd Forbes is married to the former Ina Claire Burlingham and is the father of one child, David. He is a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia (national professional music fraternity), Theta Phi (national professional religious fraternity), and Beta Theta Pi.



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August 8, 1964

E. Ruffin Jones  
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Baby Breeze  
Dean, Graduate School

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